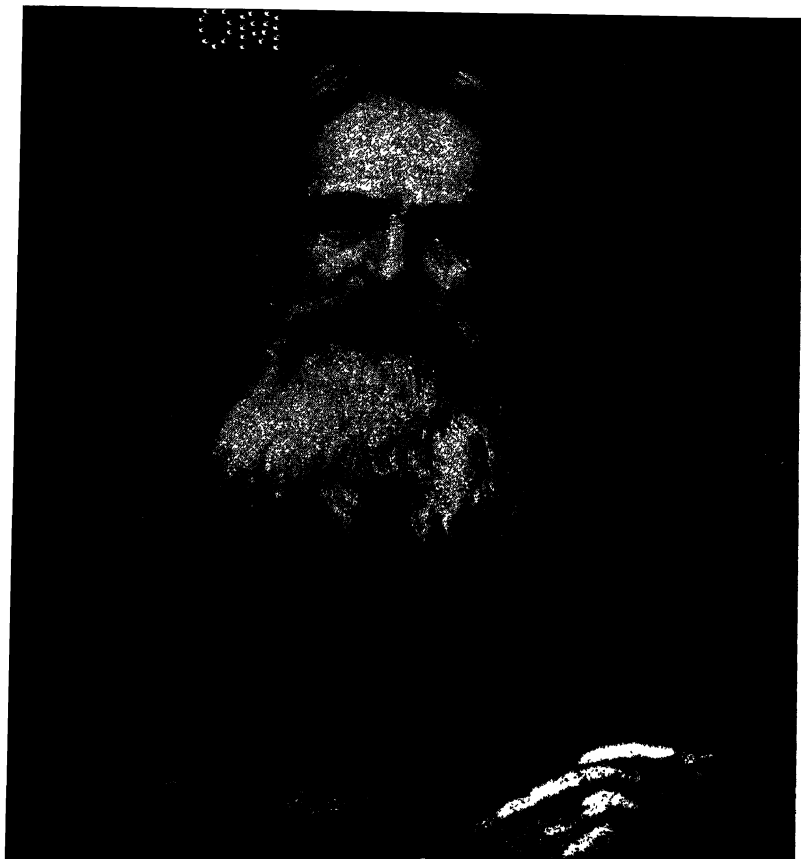


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WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT

(Aged 73)

from the painting by Sir W. B. Richmond, R.A.

Frontispiece

WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT

A BIOGRAPHY

By
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with 9 Illustrations

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My grateful acknowledgements are due to the following for their kindness in allowing me to quote from the works of various authors as named below and in the text:

Mr. Arthur Severn, Miss Violet Severn; and Messrs. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., publishers of the only authorized edition of Ruskin's works (quotations from *Modern Painters*, *The Art of England*, *Arrows of the Chace*, *Academy Notes*).

Mr. W. M. Meredith and Messrs. Constable & Co., Ltd. (*The Letters of George Meredith*).

Mr. W. Trench Fox (*Memories of Old Friends*, by Caroline Fox).

Messrs. Methuen & Co., Ltd. (quotations reprinted from *The Life and Letters of Sir J. E. Millais*).

Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd. (*Fifty Years of Work without Wages*, by Charles Rowley).

PREFACE

HOLMAN HUNT and his work have been more misunderstood and more misrepresented than has been the case with almost any other painter, and it may possibly therefore astonish some readers to learn that it was he who was the originator and leader of Pre-Raphaelitism, and that Rossetti was not a Pre-Raphaelite at all in the originally accepted meaning of the word. That such is an undoubted fact is evident to all who take the pains to investigate the matter for themselves; a biography of Holman Hunt would therefore be seriously defective if it failed to trace out the way in which this painter was related to the other members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. It would be equally defective if it omitted to record his motives as an artist, for the life of a great painter is inextricably bound up with his work. And it is all the more important to emphasize this point in these days because the tendency of a certain class of biographers is to dwell persistently upon the trifles of domestic life, especially if they are of a sensational or painful nature, to the exclusion of matters of far greater import; with the result that when we have finished their books we know much about the circumstances but little about either the mental development or the inner character of the man or woman whom they have set out to portray.

To some the chapters about Holman Hunt's motives as a reformer and his theories as to the need of truth to nature and elevation of thought in a work of art will be dull and meaningless; to others it will, perhaps, be a welcome change, when they read this book, to find essentials taking the place

of gossip; to many to whom Holman Hunt is familiar through *The Light of the World* alone, and who know nothing of his full scope as an artist or of his achievements as a reformer, the facts disclosed in this book will come as a surprise; to those who know something about his position among the great painters of our country, it has long appeared extraordinary that he is so little known or studied by his own countrymen. They believe that his day is yet to come; and, after all, what does temporary neglect signify? Tintoretto and many another great Italian master were virtually unknown to us less than a century ago.

I must, in conclusion, acknowledge with gratitude the invaluable assistance which I have had in the preparation of this work from those who knew Holman Hunt well, and from other even more intimate sources.

A. C. GISSING.

Christmas 1935.

I

CHILD AND STUDENT

1827 TO 1847

"OUR earliest recorded ancestor," Hunt tells us, "had taken part against King Charles, and at the Restoration had sought service in the Protestant cause on the Continent." Upon his return to England with the army of William III he made efforts to recover the paternal property, which had been seized during his absence, but so slow was the law to act that he was obliged to give himself up to trade as a means of livelihood, and his descendants accordingly followed in his steps. Though endowed with artistic gifts, William Hunt, the father of Holman, was early trained to regard an artist's profession as something unprofitable and eccentric. William's grandfather had been the owner of large estates at Hull, parts of which are now occupied by the dockyards, and his (William's) father, the eldest son, being driven from home after his marriage by domestic trials, settled in London, where he eventually became manager of a warehouse, and was succeeded later by William himself. The latter was destined as a matter of course for the business world, and any childish leanings towards artistic expression, to which some drawings done at the age of nine and afterwards framed and hung by an aunt bore testimony, were early suppressed and soon forgotten, though in later life he gladly made the acquaintance of painters and was fond of collecting prints of well-known pictures and of reading books and articles on the subject of art—a predilection which, however, left unchanged his

firm conviction that the only road which was likely to lead to the recovery of former prosperity was that of "sober business alone." He married Sarah, daughter of William Holman, and at the birth, on the 2nd April, 1827, of William Holman Hunt, the elder son of a family that consisted in all of two sons and five daughters, his home was in Wood Street, Cheapside, above the warehouse of which he was manager. In spite of his dread of eccentric courses, William Hunt does not appear to have regarded it as in any way dangerous to discuss pictures with the intelligent child or to allow its infant hand to dabble with the brush and paints with which he had been persuaded to colour certain prints for his son, whose artistic tendencies fortunately aroused no suspicions.

When the child was about four years old the family moved to a house in the suburbs. The warehouse was now in Dyer's Court, Aldermanbury, and young Holman would amuse himself by wandering about rooms filled with parcels and among machines that wound cotton and thread. At other times he would paint with his father's brush, until one day this precious article was lost, when he showed his ingenuity by making another one out of a piece of firewood to which he attached a suitable portion of hair cut from his own head. Though a robust and noisy child his increasing preoccupation with the pencil soon elicited a compliment from his father: "He has the great merit," said the latter, "that when provided with paper and pencil we hear no more of him for hours." But at the age of twelve and a half his expressed determination to be a painter alarmed the worthy parent and resulted in his being removed from school with the object of his beginning a business training in a warehouse; at which juncture the precocious boy thought fit to take matters into his own hands. A lad three

years older than himself was on the point of giving up his post of copying clerk to a certain estate agent of the name of James, and Hunt now saw his opportunity; he persuaded the elder boy to introduce him to Mr. James, and one morning found himself in the latter's office replying to various questions. "I could copy letters and papers," said the lad, "and I am really far on in arithmetic." "Does your father know of this?" asked the agent later, and a brief discussion as to other possibilities ensued, the upshot of which was that the master consented to examine the boy in reading, writing and arithmetic; and, being satisfied with the various tests, submitted to the child's importunity and agreed to give him temporary employment. The astonished father, hearing of these negotiations, immediately hurried to see the agent; he took a liking to him, the boy was allowed to have his wishes, and after a trial of three weeks it was decided that the latter should remain in the estate office.

Young Holman was fortunate in his choice of an employer, for the latter proved a genial, sympathetic man, and was, moreover, acquainted in a small way with the art of painting; so that when one day he chanced to see a drawing upon which his youthful copying clerk was engaged in spare moments at the office he was able to perceive promise in his work. He encouraged and assisted the lad, and even presented him with his own box of oil-colours, brushes and palette, teaching him how to use them. Later he pleaded with the father that the son should be permitted to become a painter, and there is no doubt that this kindly gentleman did noble service in enabling the parent's prejudice eventually to be overcome.

Soon after his initiation into the mysteries of oil-painting, the boy was allowed to practise drawing at a mechanics'

institute. He was also taken to the painter, John Varley, and later permitted to spend his small salary on weekly lessons from Henry Rogers, a portrait-painter, whose well-meaning tuition led the pupil into errors which were not easily eradicated. All this time he read eagerly at whatever serious books he could lay hands on. In his father's library were many volumes on history, on scientific subjects and on art; and in the office were books of equal value. These took the place of ordinary school-education, though it seemed to him in later years that they were but a poor substitute for the more systematic training. He delighted in a translation of Homer and in Plutarch, and now for the first time he gloried in the pages of Shakespeare.¹

Upon the retirement from business of Mr. James, the clerkship, which had lasted for about a year and a half, came to an end, and an interval of leisure enabled Hunt to visit the National Gallery where he saw for the first time the works of the great masters. The father was once more overcome by apprehensions as to his son's dangerous leanings, and this time declared firmly that the boy should be placed in "a strict house of business" without a moment's delay. Again Hunt took the management of his career into his own hands and applied successfully for a post at the London agency in Cateaton Street of Richard Cobden's business, where by good fortune it came in his way to practise ornamental design for cloth-patterns, and where he was able to continue his attempts at oil-painting, which he carried on in conjunction with the ordinary routine of duties, such as diary-keeping, copying letters, arranging samples of cloth and running with messages. There were occasions, however, when he would find himself without a task, and, referring to such intervals of leisure, he relates

¹ *Contemporary Review*, Vol. XLIX, p. 739.

an amusing incident about himself. The window of the room was of ground glass and he would beguile the time by drawing flies upon its roughened surface in ink and pencil. As time went on the number of these flies increased, until his employer could not refrain from remarking upon them. Entering one day he stopped suddenly in front of the window and said, "I can't make out how it is; every day I come into this room there seem to be more flies in it;" and he took out his handkerchief to brush them away.¹

Sunday being the only day on which he was granted absolute freedom he would then employ the available time in painting out-of-doors from nature, doing his utmost to make a true representation of what he saw; but, alas, such work dissatisfied his art-master, whose notions of pictorial art had little reference to the world as it was. His first attempts at representing the colours of nature were severely censured by the portrait-painter. Hunt had done his best to hit upon the green of foliage, but Mr. Rogers was shocked that grass and ivy should thus be represented. "Oh, dear no," said he, "certainly not. You haven't any idea of the key in which nature has to be treated; you must not paint foliage green like a cabbage." Grass and ivy might *appear* to be quite a bright green, but only to wrong-headed people like Hunt himself and Constable. Grass and ivy, were, in fact, not green at all; to prove which the painter produced one of his own transcripts from nature in which all the grass and foliage were coloured yellow and brown. The boy departed, still convinced that the foliage he had painted *was* green in spite of all that had been said, and it was this conviction that was later to mature and expand into the Pre-Raphaelite reform movement.

Soon afterwards took place his first visit to the Academy,

¹ *Contemporary Review*, Vol. XLIX, p. 472.

where interest was centred upon no less a personage than the Duke of Wellington, dressed in a blue coat and white trousers and standing spell-bound before a painting by Landseer.

After nearly four years of business routine an opportunity of painting his first portrait presented itself to the young student. An elderly Jewess, selling oranges one day in the offices, approached Hunt in the hope that he would buy of her. "I can't buy your oranges, Hannah," was the reply, "but if you like to come into the back office I will paint your portrait." Delighted with the idea, she consented, and in a few days an uncompleted but sufficiently advanced portrait adorned the office wall, which the master viewed with astonishment at the likeness. The latter's friends were summoned to see the painting, and it was then circulated among *their* friends, until the rumour of it reached the ears of the young artist's father, who, filled with real alarm, returned with increased vigour to the charge, and made every effort that he could to discourage the wayward boy. Hunt held vigorously to his intentions, and it is one of the strongest testimonies to his strength of will and firmness of conviction that he overbore all obstacles and finally won the day. At the age of sixteen he threw off once and for all the encumbrance of office-drudgery, and applied himself whole-heartedly to the study of art. The portrait of old Hannah remained unfinished, but what marvellous genius it displays in one whose instruction had merely been snatched up at odd moments in the midst of a routine and in the face of obstacles which would have broken the spirit of a less robust youth!

Dependent now, on account of financial troubles at home, upon his own resources, and with but a few coins in his pocket he practised his art among the sculptures of the

British Museum, in the Print Room, at the National Gallery, and occasionally at the British Institution, earning his living the while, sometimes by copying pictures, and sometimes by acting as journeyman to other copyists. In 1843¹ he began to attend lectures at the Academy Schools, which led to a glimpse of the great Turner at a distribution of medals. At the appointed time the latter entered the room in the company of other leading painters, and he is described by Hunt as "a stunted gentleman, unimposing in form, inelegantly dressed, and shambling in gait;" part of his ungracefulness being "attributable to a big head, with somewhat large features, which, although not handsome, bespoke the right to be at home in any presence." In the course of the presentation of the medals to the winning students, whose drawings were exhibited in another room, Hunt saw for the first time one who was to be his closest friend, who was to fight side by side with him in the attempt to purge contemporary art of its affectation and conventionality—John Everett Millais, who was declared winner of the first prize for drawing from the Antique. He was then a slim lad with curly hair, and two years younger than Hunt. The two met not long afterwards in the Elgin Room at the British Museum. Millais expressed admiration for a drawing of Hunt's which had happened to catch his eye, a friendly conversation ensued in which the fifteen-year-old student spoke encouragingly of the elder boy, who departed greatly cheered and with his first favourable impression of Millais more than confirmed.

In the meantime Hunt's mental outlook was undergoing development and he was rapidly forming his own ideas on the subject of art. Raphael was then the hero of heroes among painters, Michael Angelo was not so well known,

¹ The year given in Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism*.

Tintoretto, Luini, Fra Angelico and Giotto were scarcely known at all in England. A host of lesser painters received the homage of the painting-schools, and when Hunt ventured to express disapproval of Murillo he was accused of blasphemy. In vain did he search among the leading contemporary painters for a master to guide him. The end of Turner's career was rapidly approaching and his best works were then in private possession and quite unknown to art-students of the younger generation. Hunt could admire certain qualities of such men as Landseer, Etty, Leslie, William Collins, Dyce, Frith, Maclise, Cope and Mulready, but plainly saw their many shortcomings. Finding himself at variance with popular opinion and with no older painter to whose guidance he could entrust himself, he came to the conclusion that he must be his own master, and that the only source of instruction available was that afforded by those earlier painters whom he regarded as possessors of the secrets of the highest art, whilst for the correction of technical faults in his own work he made use of the more intelligent of his elder fellow-students and the Keeper of the Academy. It was not until after repeated trials that he was accepted by the Academy as probationer, and in the intervals between studies carried on at the Academy, the National Gallery, the British Institution and the British Museum, he was still obliged to support himself, which he now did by painting portraits three days in the week.

His copying of other pictures had led to one important result of which he himself has stressed the importance. "The first bit of genuine instruction," he writes, "which I received, and one, moreover, which in some ways perhaps determined the whole course of my artistic life, came about in this wise. While I was engaged in copying *The Blind*

Fiddler a visitor looking over me said that Wilkie painted it without any dead colouring, but finished each bit as fresco was done. The speaker had been the painter's pupil, and had been taught the same practice. . . . I looked at all paintings now with the question whether it had been so with them. It was a revelation to me"¹ He then began to trace the purity of the work of the Quattrocentists to its origin in the drilling afforded them by fresco painting, and resolved from that moment to put aside all loose, irresponsible handling. In view of his later methods this incident is highly significant.

Following upon his activities in London came an interval spent at Ewell, then a quiet unspoilt village amid a charming landscape. From early days he was a lover of natural scenery, and this break in his routine was naturally occupied in the endeavour to represent on canvas some of the rural delights that surrounded him. By a happy coincidence it was shortly afterwards that he was told of the first volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, which had appeared in 1843, and of which he succeeded in borrowing a copy for twenty-four hours from Cardinal Wiseman. The book entranced him and he sat up most of the night in order to finish it in the allotted time. "Of all its readers," he himself says, "none could have felt more strongly than myself that it was written expressly for him. When it had gone, the echo of its words stayed with me, and they gained a further value and meaning whenever my more solemn feelings were touched." Thus the charm of the unspoilt Surrey landscape meditated upon during the visit to Ewell, almost coinciding as it did with his first reading of Ruskin's magnificent exposition of nature and art, served to confirm Hunt in his rejection of the established conventions and mannerisms of contemporary

¹ *Contemporary Review*, Vol. XLIX, p. 472.

painters, and settled his conviction that the art of the day cried out for reform, and that such a reform could be brought about only by an abandonment of human standards and an open-hearted return to nature.

Among the results of his labours during the period of studentship are a portrait of himself at the age of seventeen, a picture entitled *Hark!* the first by which he was represented at the Royal Academy (1846) and for which his own little sister sat with a watch close to her ear, *Little Nell and her Grandfather* exhibited at the British Institution, a scene from *Woodstock*,¹ the second of his works to be exhibited at the Royal Academy (1847) and sold for £20, and the unfinished painting *Christ and the Two Marias*. For studies of palm-trees in the latter he went to Kew Gardens, where, at the end of his day's sketching, the curator, to enable him to carry on the work at home, gave him a branch of about twelve feet in length cut from one of the palms. A friend assisted him in carrying it, and when the two had got as far as Turnham Green, the one carrying the tip of the great branch and the other the stem, the friend suddenly stopped and declared in alarm that some cold, dry object which seemed to crawl and felt as large as a hand, had fallen inside his coat-collar down his back. After a brief search Hunt succeeded in extracting a dead bat that had fallen from the leaves.

During all this time Hunt and Millais were becoming close friends, visiting each other's studios from time to time, and discussing the various problems with which each was faced. Since the time when the latter had won the first prize for drawing from the Antique he had grown into a tall, independent-minded youth, with bronze-coloured

¹ Entitled *Dr. Rochecliffe performing Divine Service in the Cottage of Joceline Foliffe*.

locks standing up and "twisting and curling so thickly that the parting itself was lost."

Hunt's student-days were now rapidly drawing to an end, he had lost faith in the teaching and example of his seniors, he could not persuade himself that it was right to copy the manner in which the old masters treated their subjects, and as in childhood he had held himself independent from his father, so now he was determined to develop his gifts according to the guidance of his own conscience. We have seen with what a clear and independent judgment he viewed natural objects, with what shrewdness he compared them with those same objects as represented in accordance with contemporary art-conventions, and how Ruskin had strengthened his dawning convictions; it now remains to be seen how his increasing friendship with Millais confirmed him still further in his resolve, how the two gifted painters were to fight side by side in their warfare against popular prejudice, and how, in spite of the bitter opposition of the press, they succeeded in breaking through the barriers that are invariably set up against the salutary efforts of the reformer.

II

THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

1848

SINCE the publication of Holman Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* the fables originated by various writers and journalists as to the growth and purpose of the reform movement have been authoritatively dissipated, but as the books and articles in which these mythical theories of Pre-Raphaelitism were originated are still accessible to the student, it will be as well to say a word or two as to the beginnings of the reform.

The origin of the name dates from a certain occasion when Hunt and Millais were discussing theories of art during some night work at Millais' studio. Raphael's cartoons happened to come under discussion. Whilst retaining the profoundest reverence for these designs they were not prepared to be the slaves of public opinion, and one or two criticisms of Raphael's work were fearlessly uttered. *The Transfiguration* was condemned "for its grandiose disregard of the simplicity of truth, the pompous posturing of the Apostles, and the unspiritual attitudinizing of the Saviour." With reference to the meaningless action of the epileptic boy, Hunt quoted the criticisms of Sir Charles Bell (*Anatomy of Expression*) and asked Millais to read them for himself. It was decided that this picture constituted an important stage in the decadence of Italian art. On an earlier occasion, when the same opinion had been mentioned to other students, they had replied, "Then

you are Pre-Raphaelite ; ” and it was the recollection of this application of the term that now suggested to Hunt and Millais that it might be adopted by themselves. This was laughingly agreed upon, and when the designation came to be regarded seriously it was explained that the term *Pre-Raphaelitism* was in no way synonymous with *Pre-Raphaelism*, which latter word would have implied a servile copying of the art before Raphael’s day. Hunt’s attitude with regard to antiquarianism and imitation in art is expressed briefly in the words of Leonardo da Vinci, “ I say to painters, ‘ Never imitate the manner of another ; for thereby you become the grandson instead of the son of Nature ’.”

Raphael had a host of followers and imitators who translated his manner of work into mannerisms and affectations, and took as their example all that was inferior in the master’s art. These imitators might appropriately be included under the designation of *Raphaelites*, and it was in this sense that Hunt and Millais accepted the term *Pre-Raphaelitism* as a fitting name for their reform movement. It had never been the intention of either to base his art upon any definite school of painters or to revert to an earlier style. What each intended was to work as sincerely as did the great painters of the period prior to the decline of art that took place towards the end of Raphael’s career and continued after his death. But there was to be no antiquarianism, and the work of Hunt and Millais was to have as its foundation Nature herself. Later, when Rossetti became known to the originators of the reform, the word *Brotherhood* was, at his suggestion, added to the title, and the reformers became known as the *Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*.

At an earlier meeting between Hunt and Millais in the latter’s studio, in the middle of February, 1848, an enquiry was made by Millais as to the reason for Hunt’s failure to

continue work upon *Christ and the Two Marias*,¹ and the other gave as one of his difficulties the doubt as to how the figure of Christ should be treated. Millais' advice is significant of his attitude of mind at the moment, and indicates clearly enough that Hunt was the first to realize the full meaning of the revolutionary spirit that was about to reveal itself: "Why not look at some of the old Masters to be found in the Print Room of the British Museum?" Perceiving from this question that the younger man had failed to grasp the extent of his scruples, Hunt launched forth into a detailed exposition of his revolutionary theories, in the course of which he explained that to imitate the old Masters in the way that Millais suggested would be sheer affectation, and would only further the work of the revivalists, who were substituting lifeless mannerisms for living art.

The influence of Sir Joshua Reynolds came under discussion. Sir Joshua, so Hunt said, was a passionate lover of human nature, and, being anxious to put his best work into the principal parts of his pictures, he took little interest in his backgrounds. "Under his reign came into vogue drooping branches of brown trees over a night-like sky, or a column with a curtain unnaturally arranged, as a background to a day-lit portrait; his feeble followers imitate this arrangement in such numbers that there are few rooms in an exhibition in which we can't count twenty or thirty of the kind." The moment Sir Joshua began to depart from painting pictures that were not strictly portraits he became conventional and uninteresting. His peculiar genius died with himself, but his conventions were handed on to succeeding schools of painters, who made no attempt to paint accurately and delicately from nature, and who

¹ Towards the end of his life Hunt completed the figure of Christ,

expected to become masters of their art without humility or precision. Michael Angelo began as a child; precocious masterliness could never make a great artist; "children should begin as children, and wait for years to bring them to maturity."¹

Both agreed that the sophistication of contemporary art and the conventionality of academical training produced only mannerisms. As examples of useless conventions in the composition of a picture Hunt referred to certain rules then imposed by leading authority: that the figures in a picture should be placed along a line describing a letter S, that the several divisions of a composition should each culminate like the apex of a pyramid, that the highest light should always be on the principal figure, that one corner of a picture should always be in shadow, that the sky in a daylight picture should be dark, and so on. "These painters," wrote Hunt referring to those who had attached themselves to the mannerisms just enumerated, "were creatures of orthodox rule, line and system, seeing whose influence Constable in 1821 prophesied, 'In thirty years English art will cease to exist.' Following up this forecast of the great landscape painter, Leslie thirty years later finds the fulfilment of Constable's prediction in the death of Turner."²

Hunt's immediate plan was to paint a picture out-of-doors, with foreground and background precisely as found in nature, and the whole lit by the brightness of actual sunlight; brown foliage, smoky clouds, dark corners and other products of the human mind should give place to a representation of the natural appearance of these objects. Millais,

¹ For a full account of the discussion see Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism and the P.R. Brotherhood*, Vol. I, Ch. IV.

² *Chambers' Encyclopædia*, under "Pre-Raphaelitism,"

inspired and enlightened by Hunt's logical argument, expressed his hearty concurrence and vowed that he too would break away from the slavery of academical conventions and dead traditions. With these resolves Pre-Raphaelitism came into being. Neither Hunt nor Millais had as yet become intimate with Rossetti or Madox Brown, and the notions of such a reform movement had never entered the minds of either of the latter, Rossetti, indeed, being at the time nothing more than an elementary and untrained student.

Two of the most powerful forces for good in the domain of art were now making themselves felt—Ruskin, who in 1843, at the age of twenty-four, had published his first volume of *Modern Painters*, therein proving in powerful and convincing language that nature, not the rules of men, was the criterion of true art, and Hunt and Millais jointly, the former approaching the age of twenty and the latter two years younger, who, convinced that in the hands of their elders painting had drifted into mere mannerism, were determined to cut themselves away from academical training and to go direct to nature for their artistic growth and inspiration. Turner had already done the same, and was, until ably defended by Ruskin, exposed to the insults of journalists who were of the opinion that, because they themselves never happened to have seen nature as represented by Turner, therefore such colours and atmospheric effects as the latter depicted could not possibly exist; Hunt and Millais were quite prepared to undergo similar trials, being confident that the inspiration of nature was greater than the vogue enforced by the Royal Academy.

In the meantime Hunt, an ardent admirer of Keats, then little known, was drawing near the completion of his picture *The Eve of St. Agnes* (which was hung in the Academy

in 1848), and was preparing to bring his new principles to the test in his next picture, *Rienzi*. He and Millais had now joined a club, calling itself the Cyclographic Club, most of whose members were wholly incompetent as artists. Each furnished a design about once a month, and the designs were circulated throughout the group. On one occasion when Hunt was at Millais' house the portfolio of designs was examined and some work by D. G. Rossetti struck the two painters as a good deal superior to the other contributions. Somewhat later, Hunt and Rossetti, who had hitherto been only on "nodding terms" with each other in the art-schools, which the latter attended but rarely, became more intimate; Rossetti was loud in praise of *The Eve of St. Agnes* and proposed to pay Hunt a visit, which took place a few days later. *Rienzi* was then in progress, and Hunt explained that his aim in this work was to reject the conventional tricks and stereotyped mannerisms of the prevalent schools of painting. The conversation led to a confession from Rossetti that he was disheartened about his own practice of painting. Madox Brown had not long before agreed to take him as a pupil, and among other tasks the pupil had been told to make a study of still life from a group of bottles. Rossetti could not endure the discipline thus entailed, and in despair had given up painting for a time with the idea of concentrating upon poetry, which intention, however, on the advice of Leigh Hunt, he had abandoned.

In answer to Rossetti's appeal for advice, Hunt suggested that he should work out one of the designs that he had done for the Cyclographic Club; Rossetti was delighted with the idea and begged that he might enter Hunt's studio for instruction—a request which for various reasons had to be refused. Hunt already had a pupil, and he was at the time

living with his parents in a house the lower portion of which was an upholsterer's show-room; but, later, when he expressed his determination to gain more freedom for painting by leaving his family, Rossetti again urged him to undertake the supervision and instruction of his work; his insistence in the end won the day, and the two agreed to share a studio (at 7 Gower Street¹) for which each was to pay a portion of the rent. Writing to his brother on the 20th August, 1848, Rossetti says, "Hunt and I are now settled down quite comfortably, and he is engaged on the preliminaries for his picture *Rienzi*." This was an important moment for Rossetti, for Hunt's detailed and painstaking instructions, his understanding of the kind of pupil with whom he had to deal, and his patience and tact, fairly launched him upon his career. Hitherto he had lacked perseverance and confidence, and had he not met with the good fortune of coming thus in contact with a man of high genius and promise he might never have succeeded in extricating himself from the difficulties and entanglements which block the way to a painter's career.

During this time Hunt was obliged to do a considerable amount of portrait-painting in order to stave off poverty. *The Eve of St. Agnes*, so he tells us, was purchased for £70, and a debt owing to an uncle who had advanced money for the frame of this picture was generously cancelled; so that, with the addition of a small sum already possessed, Hunt was now provided with £78 with which to begin life.

Not long after he and Rossetti had become intimately associated, Hunt made the acquaintance of Thomas Woolner, the sculptor, and Ford Madox Brown. With the last-named, though admiring his work for its individual genius and manly vigour, Hunt could not but disagree as to the vital principles

¹ See *Contemporary Review*, Vol. XLIX, p. 480.

of his art, which was conventional in accordance with the standards of the day, and bore no affinity to the qualities of Pre-Raphaelitism. Woolner's highly poetic spirit and his ambition to do work of genuine truthfulness induced Hunt and Millais to agree to a suggestion of Rossetti that he should be enrolled as a member of their reform movement. Further acquaintances were William Rossetti and the somnolent James Collinson; both of whom, through Rossetti's enthusiastic pleading, were admitted to the Brotherhood. The former possessed no qualification beyond the fact that he applied himself each night to drawing, and regularly executed "conscientious, although rigid, transcripts from the nude," and the latter had "distinguished himself by paintings of the *genre* kind," and was writing poetry in the highest Church spirit. To complete the group of seven, Hunt rashly suggested his friend, F. G. Stephens, who had not achieved anything as an artist, but whom it was expected the whirl of artistic enthusiasm would transform with the others into a genuine painter. All promised Millais and Hunt that their deficiencies would be speedily atoned for, so that, with the exception of the originators, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood may be said to have been built upon a foundation composed of momentary enthusiasm and promises for the future.

Millais was filled with misgivings as to the result of these arrangements, and regarded the rising taste for Gothic art as one of the chief sources of danger, not presumably through any dislike of Gothic art as such, but because the Gothic revival consisted of the merely slavish imitation of mediæval examples by people who were of the very opposite spirit from that of the men who had produced the glories of the Middle Ages, and who were not likely to understand Ruskin's exposition of the Gothic style in any but a

superficial sense. Such an affectation as a Gothic revival on the part of those who possessed no true sympathy with the Gothic builders and carvers was resulting in the ruin of many an artist, and it was carefully explained to the new members of the Brotherhood that Pre-Raphaelitism was a movement back to Nature and not by any means a revival of early art.

After what has already been said concerning the rise of Pre-Raphaelitism it is hardly necessary to contradict statements to the effect that this reform was connected with the Æsthetic Movement. There is no parallel between the two ; one might just as well try to relate sunshine to the artificial glare of the theatre or music hall, as to connect them in any way ; and yet such writers as R. H. Gretton, in his recent *Modern History of the English People* (a collection of news items gathered together into three volumes), still speak of them both under the same category.

In order that Millais might take stock of the proposed new members, a meeting of them was held in the autumn (William Rossetti says August or September) of 1848 in his studio, when, among other items, a set of engravings of the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa was examined and discussed. Praise was bestowed upon them because of their quaint charms of invention, and because the incidents depicted were the result of a close observation of nature ; the sweet humour of Benozzo Gozzoli was declared to be Chaucerian, "and," writes Hunt, "this English spirit we acclaimed as the standard under which we were to make our advance." Yet those characteristics which resulted from lack of knowledge, ignorance of perspective, immature powers of draughtsmanship and inability to represent light and shade were recognized as being out of date and no longer justifiable ; and, though the revivalists in their affectation

might imitate such conventionalities as much as they pleased, the reform movement initiated by Hunt and Millais would have nothing to do with them. It is interesting to find that three years before, in 1845, Ruskin was so captivated by these frescoes that he persuaded the Abbé to allow him to erect a scaffold so that he might make a series of outline studies from Benozzo Gozzoli. They were then beginning to be attacked by the "improver," which provoked Ruskin into the exclamation, "I shall certainly get into the habit of swearing in Italy."

It has been stated more than once that the examination of the engravings of the frescoes at Pisa marked the establishment of the P.R. Brotherhood. The statement is misleading if it gives birth to the supposition that Pre-Raphaelitism began at that date. The meeting was summoned in order that Millais might take stock of the proposed new members of the Brotherhood, and the result of it was that the initial enrolment of Woolner, William Rossetti, Collinson and Stephens was now fully ratified. The only trustworthy source of information relating to this subject is Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, in which the early beginnings of the Brotherhood are dealt with carefully and minutely. According to William Rossetti only Hunt, Millais and Rossetti were present at the Campo Santo meeting, but the probabilities are that this was quite another occasion. In J. G. Millais' *Life* of his father, the account of the origin of the P.R.B., though mainly from Hunt himself, is not strictly accurate; nor is that which Hunt gives in the *Contemporary Review* of 1886. The reason is not difficult to perceive. J. G. Millais gained his information chiefly from a long conversation with Hunt, and, in the case of verbal accounts, inaccuracies on the part of both the narrator and the reporter can scarcely be

avoided. The articles which Hunt wrote for the *Contemporary Review* were produced at a period of little leisure and much stress, so that he was unable to afford the time necessary for the recollection and investigation of the lesser details. Moreover, as he himself confesses, his anxiety to show generosity to his old friend Rossetti, whose death had taken place in 1882, had induced him to obscure some of the facts connected with the P.R.B. ; and this kindly impulse led to false impressions which at a later date he was anxious to correct for the sake of truth. He did so in his book, and all that he says there as to the rise and growth of Pre-Raphaelitism is, without doubt, authoritative.

III

D. G. ROSSETTI

1848 TO 1849

DURING the progress of *Rienzi*, of which Rossetti sat for the head of the principal figure, Hunt was having his attention diverted by the inability of his pupil to master the science of perspective, which, in spite of every argument, was denounced as valueless. Nor did he at any subsequent time master this important science, which was always a matter of extreme difficulty to him; referring to the progress of Rossetti's *Found*, painted some years later, W. Bell Scott in his *Autobiography* says, "Strange to say, the background and the perspective baffled him. He . . . had tried to carry it out by himself over and over, and from the first had got the simple matter of perspective into a muddle." Hunt has written the best description that exists of his famous companion, and, as this shows such a remarkable power of verbal portraiture, it will be worth quoting in part:

"Rossetti is before my mind's eye now, as daily communion with him at the most impressionable period of life made him appear. Imagine, then, a young man of decidedly southern breed and aspect, about five feet seven in height, with long brown hair touching his shoulders, not caring to walk erect, but rolling carelessly as he slouched along, pouting with parted lips, searching with dreamy eyes; the openings large and oval; grey eyes, looking directly only when arrested by external interest, otherwise gazing listlessly about, the iris not reaching the lower lid, the ball of the eye somewhat prominent by its fullness, although not

by lack of depth in the orbits; the lids above and below tawny colour. His nose was aquiline, delicate, with a depression from the frontal sinus shaping the bridge; the nostrils full, the brow rounded and prominent, and the line of jaw angular and marked, while still uncovered with beard. His shoulders were not square, and only just masculine in shape. His singularity of gait depended upon his width of hip, which was unusual. . . . He was careless in his dress, which was, as then not very unusual with professional men, black and of evening cut. So indifferent was he to the accepted requirements of society that he would allow spots of mud to remain dry on his clothes for several days. He wore a brown overcoat, and, with his pushing stride and careless exclamations, a special scrutiny would have been needed to discern the refinement and tenderness that dwelt in the breast of the defiant youth; but anyone who approached and addressed him was struck with surprise to find all critical impressions dissipated in a moment, for the language of the painter was wealthy and polished, and he proved to be courteous, gentle and winsome, generous in compliment, rich in interest in the pursuits of others, while he talked much about his own, and in every respect, as far as could be shown by outward manner, a cultured gentleman."

And a little later Hunt describes him meditating upon his work: "His tongue was hushed, he remained fixed and inattentive to all that went on about him, he rocked himself to and fro, and at times he moaned lowly, or hummed for a brief minute, as though telling off some idea. All this while he peered intently before him, looking hungry and eager, and passing by in his regard any who came before him, as if not seen at all. Then he would often get up and walk out of the room without saying a word. Years

afterwards, when he became stout, and people, not without some reason, found a resemblance in him to the bust of Shakespeare at Stratford-on-Avon, and, later still, when he had outgrown this resemblance, it seemed to me that it was in his early days only that the soul within had been truly seen in his face.”¹

Parts of this verbal description may be compared with Hunt’s painting of Rossetti made in 1853 after a pastel drawing.

Interesting though Rossetti was as a friend, as pupil to an artist who was struggling to earn a livelihood he must have been exceedingly troublesome. He was impatient, changeable, impulsive and wholly averse to the discipline that is essential to the training of a painter; indeed, Hunt records how he more than once doubted whether Rossetti would ever gain proficiency. During the progress of *The Girlhood of the Virgin* one of the little girls whom he used as a model for the angel quite naturally found it difficult to keep still, with the result that Rossetti, entirely losing his temper, stormed at the poor child, overthrew his tools, stamped about and made such an uproar that the innocent little model screamed with fright, clung to her conductress and was altogether too terrified to be comforted by the repentant painter. Under such circumstances as these Hunt’s position cannot have been an ideal one, and it is not surprising that he threatened to separate unless permanent tranquillity could be restored in the studio.

Another trouble was that Rossetti was in the habit of receiving visits from his numerous friends during the precious moments when his colleague was toiling at his *Rienzi* picture. Rigid economy was an essential and Hunt’s meals were of the simplest. Meat no longer formed

¹ *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.*

a part of his diet, having been abandoned both on account of its cost and in imitation of Shelley's example. Gabriel and William Rossetti were frequent visitors to his simple board, and on more than one occasion the former would arrive with a company of his own fellow-students. One evening an unusually large invasion took place, and Hunt wisely decided not to invite them to a meal; but Rossetti was not thus to be put off; observing after some little time that there was no suggestion of food, he suddenly exclaimed, "Now, Hunt, don't keep us waiting any longer, I have promised them all supper!" So the uninvited guests were regaled as well as the means of the host would allow.

Such little incidents may be regarded as humorous by those upon whom the cares of life do not press heavily, but Hunt's circumstances at the time were anything but propitious. His father having, through the dishonesty of the contractor, lost all his capital in a building speculation, was in too great poverty to afford him the slightest assistance; on account of its minute detail and truthfulness *Rienzi* was making but slow progress; pocket-money was rapidly diminishing, but he had embarked upon his perilous course and could not now turn back. One night, while returning from the Life School, he happened to meet his former employer, Mr. James, the estate agent, who showed anxiety to know something of the progress of his painting. The two entered the studio and Hunt explained his unfinished picture. The old gentleman sighed upon viewing the work, made an enquiry, and then spoke in words of grave discouragement, imploring the young painter to abandon such a weak production, and, instead, to paint something tragic and sensational—"a tragic-looking head, screaming war, famine and slaughter," with "the background black as possible." In a fortnight, the time that remained for the

completion of *Rienzi*, the whole would be finished, it would be hung in the Exhibition and no spectator would fail to see it. And so the kindly visitor departed, leaving Hunt to the despair of his own reflections.

A chill came over his spirit and he began to blame himself for incurring the serious hindrances that resulted from his having got himself involved with Rossetti when all available time should have been devoted to his own work. His money had nearly all been spent and his picture would probably not be completed in time for the Academy Exhibition. Hunt was of a happy disposition and not usually given to melancholy brooding, but the ominous words of Mr. James went to his heart and we find him almost despairing. "What is the good of struggling?" he asked himself. "Your chances in life are overweighted."

Among the occasional visitors to the joint studio of Hunt and Rossetti was W. Bell Scott, whose reference to Hunt at this early date is interesting. Describing his visit, which he does not date accurately but which may have taken place at about the end of 1848, he speaks of "a room not very commodious for two, furnished with the inevitable lay figure in all its loveliness. They were both working in the quite novel manner of elaboration as yet untalked of, kept secret apparently, but which even next year began to make a noise in the world and to raise a critical clamour. . . . Holman Hunt's picture was the *Oath of Rienzi over the Body of his Brother*, designed with every modern advantage in composition and expression. I saw at once he was an educated artist, and a very skilful one."¹

The *Rienzi* was finished in time for the Academy, and was duly hung in May, 1849. Though immature, it is an important painting in that it shares with Millais' *Lorenzo*

¹ W. Bell Scott's *Autobiography*, Vol. I Ch. XIX.

and *Isabella* the honour of being the first outcome of Pre-Raphaelitism and the first to bear the initials P.R.B., in spite of the fact that, as will be seen, Rossetti's picture was the first to be exhibited. Millais' picture, which is probably the most wonderful painting, as Hunt says, that any youth under twenty years of age ever painted, was sold for £150 to three tailors in Bond Street, a suit of clothes being added on account of a slight reduction from the price demanded. *Rienzi*, however, did not enjoy an immediate sale, and this disappointment, coupled with unfavourable criticism, added considerably to the discouragement of the painter. The more intelligent praised Millais' *Lorenzo and Isabella* unreservedly. Madox Brown, hitherto prejudiced against Millais' "pretension," and himself at the time painting after the manner of a French school with all its conventionalities, could not restrain his admiration; he said to Hunt, "I assure you, Hunt, I never was so astonished in my whole life. Millais is no longer merely a very satisfactory fulfiller of the sanguine expectations of his prejudiced friends, he is a master of the most exalted proficiency."

Rossetti, bent upon anticipating his benefactors and colleagues, had secretly sent his picture, *The Girlhood of the Virgin*, bearing the mystic letters P.R.B., not to the Academy, but to the "Free Exhibition" near Hyde Park Corner, where it was exhibited according to William Rossetti at the end of March, 1849. This action was not in accordance with previous arrangements, since one of the purposes of the Brotherhood was that each should endeavour to forward the general good and not act solely for his personal advantage. The result of Rossetti's diplomatic move was that his picture was being viewed by the public and mentioned in the press while those of his colleagues were still shut up in the Academy. Naturally, therefore, the picture



RIENZI

which had been painted under Hunt's supervision and at which Hunt had given practical assistance, enabling Rossetti to complete it in a thoroughly Pre-Raphaelite manner as to colour and detail, was immediately regarded as the production of the originator of a new school; and, on account of the obvious reversion to an earlier style of painting, it was assumed that the aim of this new movement was to revive a dead art, which, incidentally, had already been attempted by several leading painters. So that Hunt experienced the mortification of knowing that the public had from that moment marked down Rossetti as leader of his reform movement, and that they had interpreted that movement as early Christian in its tendency. And, indeed, Rossetti himself did not scruple to keep up in casual conversation the illusion as to his own leadership, so that even Ruskin was deceived.

Unable to face his injured benefactor, Rossetti without explanation ceased to attend Hunt's studio, and some weeks later sent a porter to collect his belongings, with the message that he had ceased on the previous Lady Day to be responsible for the discharge of his share of the rent. When he planned to quit his father's house Hunt had arranged to sleep in the studio in order to avoid the expense of a second room; but, in agreeing to allow Rossetti to share the studio, he had been obliged to engage a separate bedroom; this bedroom was now legally upon his hands until the end of a quarter's notice, but, being seriously short of funds, he persuaded his landlord into a compromise, which enabled him to dispense with the room at an earlier date.

With only a few pounds in his pocket he now began to work out the design for his picture of *Christians escaping from Druids*. There was as yet no offer for the purchase of *Rienzi*, although an architect, Nockalls Cottingham by

name, paid Hunt a visit, praised it enthusiastically, and promised to find "an abundance of employment" for the Pre-Raphaelites. At the same time he offered Hunt a commission, namely, to paint four spandrels for a house with pictures representing Morn, Noon, Evening and Night, at the price of fifty guineas for each. The commission was accepted, and the patron gave Hunt an order upon a colourman for a tube of gold ground up in oil for use in the work. While Hunt was engaged upon the designs, the same gentleman introduced him to a certain lady with the request that he would at once begin a portrait of her. The portrait was completed and delivered to the architect, together with two sketch-designs, with which he was delighted. A few weeks passed and Hunt received no communication from his patron. Painting is an expensive art; by this time the painter's funds were almost exhausted and he decided to write to Mr. Cottingham to request that his client would, in order to enable him to continue the work, make an advance of half the sum agreed upon for each picture. The reply was decisive; the worthy gentleman begged to inform Hunt that he was "grasping and greedy" and liable to overreach himself. He had consulted with his patron as to the "extraordinarily unreasonable proposal," who would not listen to it for a moment. Consequently his sketches were returned and his services were no longer required. Would he restore to him by return of post the order for the gold paint?

Neither the portrait nor the designs were ever paid for, and, shortly afterwards, Woolner, who had carved a statuette for the same architect, saw one day a copy of his work in Minton ware exhibited in a shop window. In answer to some enquiries in the shop he was informed that the statuette "was an exquisite design by the rising sculptor, Nockalls

Cottingham," from whom the firm had purchased the copyright. Soon after this Cottingham embarked for America, his ship foundered, and he was among the drowned.

These are some of the annoyances to which artists are exposed, but worse trouble was to follow. The difficulties caused by Rossetti's sudden abandonment of the studio and his refusal to pay his share of the rent, culminating in the affair of Nockalls Cottingham, had reduced Hunt to the lowest stages of poverty. Food was the first necessity, and when the time came for paying the rent the landlord had to be persuaded to forgo his claims. Time passed, until the landlord, infuriated by the delay, one day burst into Hunt's studio, seized all his sketches, most of his books and his furniture, and ejected him.

All that could now be done was to take refuge in his father's house; and, although his reception appears to have been not unkind, his brief sojourn at home cannot have been a happy one, seeing that he must have been fully conscious of his father's convictions that what he had long before foretold as to the fate of his artist son had now in very deed come to pass. Yet fortune had not entirely forsaken our struggling painter, for, at the very moment when he was on the point of despair, kindly assistance was on the threshold.

Not long before the ejection took place, the painter, Augustus Leopold Egg, had called at Hunt's studio and introduced himself, explaining by way of apology that he had greatly admired the picture *Rienzi* and was sorry to hear that it was not sold. He examined the picture again in the studio, and declared himself more pleased with it than ever. He departed, but came again in a few days with the request that as a great favour Hunt should allow him to take *Rienzi* to the house of a friend of his, who, not being able to go to the Exhibition, was anxious to see it.

Hunt gladly complied, and the picture was delivered at Egg's house in Bayswater. On the following morning the disturbing events just related took place. No sooner, however, had Hunt established himself with his family, than a note came from Egg asking him to call ; which he promptly did, to find that a certain well-known collector, a Mr. Gibbons, had bought *Rienzi* for £100, with £5 extra for the frame. On the 14th July, 1849, so says the *Pre-Raphaelite Journal*,¹ the payment was made. Hunt forthwith opened his first account at the bank, and then went and paid the sum due to his irate landlord, who ever afterwards believed he had been " shamming poverty."

With mind relieved and habitual serenity of temper restored, he spent a month at the Lea marshes where he painted the background and foreground of his Druid picture. Rossetti, having waited until his desertion of Hunt had become a thing of the past, now thought it wise to renew friendship with him ; against which the forgiving nature of the other raised no barriers ; and, before Hunt's departure for the marshes, the two had arranged to study ancient and modern art in Paris and Belgium, at the recommendation of Augustus Egg, paying particular attention to Ghent and Bruges. Hunt in the meantime, with no studio at his disposal, made use of that of Madox Brown for some finishing touches to *Rienzi*.

¹ The statements of William Rossetti are liable to so many inaccuracies that it is scarcely worth referring to the fact that his account of the negotiations with Mr. Gibbons and others differs from that given by Hunt himself. For instance, Rossetti says that *Rienzi* was sold for 160 guineas. Presumably, however, the dates of the diary-entries are correct. Hunt was scrupulously careful in all that he said, and whenever his account of important events cannot be reconciled with Rossetti's, as is frequently the case, precedence must be given to the former. It is natural, however, that occasional lapses of memory should occur in Hunt's book—for instance, he says that it was the first week in August that he went to fetch his unsold *Rienzi* from the Academy, which cannot, I think, have been the case. As a typical example of William Rossetti's reckless disregard of facts, see his prefatory notice to the edition of Longfellow's poems published in 1870 by Moxon.

IV

POVERTY AND PUBLIC INSULT 1849 TO 1850

THE departure for France took place on the 27th September, 1849, and Rossetti commemorated the occasion of the journey from London to Folkestone with the following realistic description of his companion :

Hunt reads Dumas, hard-lipped, with heavy jowl
And brows hung low, and the long ends of hair
Standing out limp. . . .¹

The two returned late in October, having made a thorough exploration of the Louvre, admired Angelico's *Coronation of the Virgin*, Titian's *Entombment*, Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, and inspected many other works of importance here and elsewhere. They then visited Brussels, Bruges, Ghent and Antwerp, at the last-named of which Rubens disappointed them. "We came back," writes Hunt, "with richer minds, but without change of purpose."

Having procured lodgings at 5 Prospect Place, Cheyne Walk, Hunt resumed his *Christians escaping from Druids*. It was at this time that the short-lived Pre-Raphaelite publication, *The Germ*, came into being ; and another event that took place was the discovery, through Walter Deverell, son of the secretary at the School of Design and previously a fellow-student with Hunt at the Academy, of Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, whom Deverell had seen in the back workroom of a milliner's shop, and whom he described

¹ *Family Letters of D.G.R.*

to Hunt and Rossetti as "like a queen, magnificently tall, with a lovely figure, a stately neck, and a face of the most delicate and finished modelling . . . grey eyes, and her hair is like dazzling copper, and shimmers with lustre as she waves it down." She sat later to Hunt for the painting, in his *Christians escaping from Druids*, of the girl on the right of the priest, and some time afterwards had the ill fortune of engaging the interest of Rossetti, whose unscrupulousness and increasing degradation wrecked a life that under favourable circumstances might have developed gifts worthy of real distinction.

Hitherto the true meaning of the initials P.R.B. was unknown, and their presence on the pictures exhibited was an enigma to the public, who spent their time in guessing at the mystic device. It had been agreed by the Brotherhood that, as a precautionary measure, the letters should be kept a strict secret, but now, all of a sudden, a paragraph disclosing their meaning and ridiculing the Pre-Raphaelites appeared in a newspaper, and it was evident that some member of the body had played false. The result of this revelation was an immediate increase of the hostility that had already shown itself against the reform movement—a hostility which rapidly grew to universal fury on all hands, and threatened ruin to the little band and destruction to all prospects of success for Hunt's new picture. At the next meeting of the Brotherhood an investigation was carried out, which drew from Rossetti the confession of guilt.

The storm of public and journalistic abuse reached its climax when, in 1850, Hunt's *Christians escaping from Druids* and the works of his colleagues were exhibited. Millais' *Christ in the Home of His Parents* was the main point of the attack, of which Dickens was in the vanguard. The press called the picture revolting and blasphemous; Dickens,

under the influence of friends, launched forth into the heartiest of abuse, and when *he* expressed an opinion he did so in no uncertain terms. "In the foreground of that carpenter's shop," he wrote in *Household Words*, "is a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-headed boy in a bed-gown: who appears to have received a poke in the hand from the stick of another boy with whom he has been playing in an adjacent gutter; and to be holding it up for the contemplation of a kneeling woman, so horrible in her ugliness, that (supposing it were possible for any human creature to exist for a moment with that dislocated throat) she would stand out from the rest of the company as a Monster in the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest gin-shop in England."¹ This makes splendid reading and one enjoys Dickens' wholesale methods of condemnation, but the Pre-Raphaelites were by no means gratified by such a vigorous outburst, and Dickens himself regretted it when he grew more familiar with their intentions.

Finding that he had drawn as much personal advantage from his Pre-Raphaelite colleagues as he was likely to get, and that the ground which they held was now under severe hostile fire, Rossetti, whose motto had always been "every man for himself," thought it prudent at this juncture to retire from the fray and to exhibit no more of his pictures in public. This was a happy resolve for himself, but, since the lesser members of the Brotherhood were but feeble allies, it left his benefactor and Millais to withstand the assaults alone, which they continued to do throughout a succession of very difficult years.

Mortified by the insults that Dickens and the press had poured upon Pre-Raphaelitism, and with his picture as yet unsold, Hunt was once again in the grip of extreme poverty.

¹ *Household Words*, 15th June, 1850, under "Old Lamps for New Ones."

There was an occasion on which he could not tell where to find the penny for the stamp of a letter he had written, but in this small matter Providence came to the rescue and more than supplied his need. He was reduced to the depths of despair and discouragement, and as near submission to defeat as he had ever been; happening unconsciously to thrust his hands between the back and the seat of the arm-chair in which he was disconsolately seated, he felt deep down in the hollow a solid body, circular like a coin, which, when it was extracted, proved to be no less than half-a-crown. Thus he was enabled to supplement his scanty supply of food as well as to provide himself with the much needed postage stamp, and who knows but that this happy little coincidence occurred in order to assure him that better times were in store, and that his honest strivings were not to be defeated?

But difficulties were not yet at an end. An elder member of the Academy, who had admired *Rienzi*, had some time previously commissioned him to paint a picture of some figures from Shakespeare or Tennyson, or any other well-known poet. As a last resource he decided to undertake this deferred task. The subjects selected were *The Lady of Shalott*, *Claudio and Isabella*, and another. For several days he worked at them without ceasing, and then, anxious to see the finished result and to hear the opinion of his friend, he sat up all night, completed the drawings, went for a swim in the Thames at daybreak, and set off to the house of his patron, who had just risen from his breakfast. Hunt apologized for the long delay in preparing the designs, and was on the point of displaying the latter before his friend, when, to his utter consternation, the other declared that he had never given any such commission, that he had always disliked Hunt's work so much as to preclude any

possibility of his having ever entertained such an idea ; then he added that he would, however, condescend to see the drawings. The parcel was opened, and no sooner were the contents revealed to the gaze of the patron than he burst out with renewed disgust, saying that, even if he had intended to purchase Hunt's work, the sight of the present designs, "with their hideous affectation," would have put an end to all such intentions. Hunt refers to this incident as an example of the way in which popular prejudice "will warp judgment, memory and manners." The memory and manners of this individual certainly left something to be desired. The explanation lies in the fact that, at the time when the commission had been given, the public and journalistic assaults upon Pre-Raphaelitism had not begun, but now a change had taken place, and the member of the Academy had, in imitation of Mr. Pickwick, decided to throw in his lot with the majority. Possibly he was of a bilious tendency, in which case Hunt's visit was injudiciously near his breakfast. However that may be, this final blow, with its startling suddenness, for the moment took the life out of our struggling painter. Half-stunned he left the house, and when he emerged into the street he was obliged to pause for a few minutes, giddy and bewildered, not knowing where to turn his steps.

He had reached the utmost limits of poverty in following the guidance of his own conscience, which told him that *his* aims were right and public criticism grossly wrong ; his mind and imagination were teeming with ideas of the work he could do if only circumstances were moderately favourable ; and the technical skill that had resulted from years of patient toil now enabled him to give ample expression to those ideas. He was a painter of no mean abilities, a man of rare insight and genius ; but the whole world was against

him, and it seemed as though his fondest dreams would come to nought ; that the finest work of his hand and mind would be thrown back into his face with the words, " We do not want nature and real life ; they are hideous and affected."

Walking along the streetlike one in a dream he bethought him of the genial, sensible Augustus Egg, whose house was not far away. Would his friend still be favourably disposed, or had he, too, gone after the majority like one of a flock of geese? Encouraged by the thought of the manner in which Egg had already assisted him, he made his way to his cottage in Queen's Road. The painter was at breakfast ; but he listened with sympathy to Hunt's tale, examined the designs, mused, made a few enquiries, and then burst out with the following ardent expressions : " And *did* so and so say that these designs were hideous and affected? *Did* he say that he had never given you a commission? *Did* you offer to paint any of these for fifty pounds?—*I* declare they are admirable." Hunt must have felt as if he had awakened from a nightmare, especially when Egg offered to pay him twenty-five guineas for a small picture and to write him a cheque for the amount on the spot. After a brief discussion it was decided that a painting of *Claudio and Isabella* should be begun at once, not the smaller picture proposed ; and that, though Egg could not afford himself to be the purchaser, he would " settle about its ownership afterwards." Hunt's account of these arrangements is not very clear, but from later references it appears that the final understanding was that Egg should become the possessor of the *Claudio and Isabella* at the price of £25.

Hunt went on his way rejoicing, gained permission to paint inside the Lollard prison at Lambeth Palace for the background of his work, and engaged a man for a couple of

shillings to carry some of his painting apparatus thither. Shortage of funds was now showing itself in the suit he wore, which was sadly dilapidated—so much so, indeed, that *he* was thought to be the servant, and the latter, smartly attired in comparison, was mistaken for the master.

At this stage in the history of Pre-Raphaelitism it had become evident that the so-called Brotherhood in reality consisted of no more than two members—Hunt and Millais. Rossetti, as we have seen, had virtually retired from the fray, to the profound disappointment of those who had regarded him as a powerful ally, and to the disgust of Millais' father, who said, "What's the good of an ally who keeps out of the fight, disowning his friends if they are beaten, and claiming part of the conquest if they win?" But it does not require very great knowledge of Rossetti's paintings to perceive that he never was a Pre-Raphaelite properly so-called. Pre-Raphaelitism was a movement back to nature; Rossetti was essentially a revivalist of early church art. The conventionalism of the early painters, which Hunt and Millais had made it their business to avoid, Rossetti made use of in the traditional style. To say this is not to depreciate Rossetti as an artist. An Italian by birth he had inherited a keen insight into the relationship of the various colours; and, as Ruskin has truly pointed out,¹ his system was based upon the principles of the best manuscript illumination; it was akin to the system of colour employed in mediæval painted glass, with the added beauties of light and shade. But herein lie both his strongest and his weakest qualities as a painter, as well as the essential difference of his work from that of the true Pre-Raphaelites. Ruskin himself had never been informed of the origin of Pre-Raphaelitism, and quite naturally, therefore, made a

¹ *The Art of England*, Lecture 1.

wrong use of the term ; but the following passage of his shows clearly enough that Rossetti cannot be classed as Pre-Raphaelite if we are to be just to the two painters who first adopted the title and who originated the reform :

“ The specialty of colour-method which I have signalized in Rossetti, as founded on missal painting, is in exactly that degree conventional and unreal ” (and therefore distinct from Pre-Raphaelitism). “ Its light is not the light of sunshine itself, but of sunshine diffused through coloured glass. And in object-painting he not only refused, partly through idleness, partly in absolute want of opportunity for the study of nature involved in his choice of abode in a garret at Blackfriars—refused, I say, the natural aid of pure landscape and sky. . . . Whereas Holman Hunt, in the very beginning of his career, fixed his mind, as a colourist, on the true representation of actual sunshine, of growing leafage, of living rock, of heavenly cloud.”¹

To return, now, to the rapidly disintegrating Brotherhood, Woolner had not exhibited anything, and, in despair at his want of encouragement, broke up a large clay model that had cost him months of toil, and fled away to Australia with the gold-diggers. William Rossetti was engaged in office-work, and therefore could have done nothing to forward the movement even had he possessed the ability. Stephens had proved useless ; finding that he was unable to turn himself into an artist, he decided that it would be easier to criticize the art of others, so a little later on he became an art-critic ; and Collinson, whose work was wanting in original genius, was on the point of abandoning the P.R.B. as opposed to his Roman Catholic tenets. Hunt now realized to the full that he had been over-sanguine in his hopes that all seven members would play worthy parts ; having

¹ *The Art of England*, Lecture 1.

reflected upon the limited powers of these so-called "sleeping members," he felt that it would be wise to allow them to continue to sleep, since their awakening might be a doubtful benefit, and the public was likely to be more impressed by their sleeping presence than by any of their activities. "Leave them alone now," he said to Millais' brother; "if they should wake up later on, the effect would be less damaging to us than if they did so now."

Ford Madox Brown, though he more than once expressed keen admiration of Pre-Raphaelite work and was influenced by it to a limited extent, never became a Pre-Raphaelite; and, indeed, seeing that (as Hunt says) "German antiquarianism, which was Brown's last form of allegiance to Continental dogma, was one of the principal enemies which we originally committed ourselves to destroy," he could never have been invited to become a member.

V

“ VALENTINE AND SYLVIA ”

1850 TO 1851

IN the summer of 1850 Hunt received his first and only offer of public work. During the progress of *Claudio and Isabella*, he was entrusted with the cleaning and restoring of the wall-paintings by Rigaud at the Trinity House, for which he received a guinea a day for the cleaning and double the amount for the restoration, with an additional guinea for an assistant (F. G. Stephens), who undertook the flat shadings on the blue ground. The upper part of the hall was unventilated, with the result that he was almost asphyxiated by the fumes of the wet white lead on the walls. Apart, however, from this little defect, Hunt regarded the work as fine fun. “ Father Thames, like London Bridge in the old nursery song, had to be built up again, and he had to be brought out of a fog, too. I stood on a springy plank dashing away at him with large brushes, and when he had a new suit of paint from top to toe I rescued a bale of goods, a globe, a pair of compasses, three or four volumes, a triton or two, perhaps a Mercury with his caduceus, a mermaid and merman, and I emphasized the eye of Providence for a day’s work.”

Not long after the completion of the only public work with which the country honoured one of her greatest painters, he was cheered by another piece of good fortune, which came about through the generosity of his friend Millais, who had gone to Oxford, and, together with Charles Collins, was painting at Abingdon. The two were here

brought into touch with Mr. and Mrs. Combe, of the University Press, and later with Mr. Bennet, uncle of Mrs. Combe. In the course of conversation with old Mr. Bennet it came out that the latter was anxious to make a handsome present to the Combes. Money was no object with the old gentleman, and when he asked Millais for advice as to what to give them, the latter made prompt use of the opportunity to benefit his friend who was struggling in London. "Why, my dear Mr. Bennet," said he, "I will tell you the very thing of all others. It's Hunt's picture in the Academy . . . Hunt only wants 160 guineas, and in a few years I will undertake to say it will be worth ten or twenty times the sum."

"Do you really think so? Eh? Eh?" was the reply.

"I am sure of it," said Millais, and the matter was settled.

Hunt was asked to send the picture of the *Christians escaping from Druids* for Mr. Bennet's inspection. It was instantly dispatched, in a day or two a cheque for 160 guineas reached him, and he was once more saved.

His next picture was to be a scene from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (*Valentine and Sylvia*) for which a design had already been made, and he was now able to afford a visit to the country in order to paint his woodland background. In the middle of October, 1850, we find him in lodgings at Sevenoaks with Rossetti, who also was to paint in the open air; he worked steadily in Knole Park, in spite of occasional heavy falls of rain which obliged him to send to London for a further supply of clothes. There is an entry in the *P.R.B. Journal*, under date the 5th November, which says that he was "progressing well, painting the ground all covered with red autumn leaves," and that Woolner had

paid the two painters a visit. The work in Knole Park was continued until the middle of November, when Hunt returned to town and began upon the figures, for which suitable models were duly procured, Miss Siddal consenting to sit for Sylvia.

But just as matters were progressing favourably an unfortunate acquaintanceship resulted in the renewal of difficulties. Hunt was introduced by a fellow-student, Smith by name, to a man whom he refers to as Warwick, and who, he was given to understand, was a gentleman of some considerable fortune. Warwick, after trying one profession after another without success, had decided to devote himself to his own hobbies. He visited Hunt's studio one day, smartly dressed and full of the loftiest poetical and artistic sentiments, expressing the keenest admiration for the work of the P.R.B. This visit was followed shortly by an invitation to his house in Clapham to dinner, which was to be preceded by practice in his garden "with duelling-pistols of exquisite make." The invitation was accepted by the trustful Hunt, and in due course the practice with pistols took place, much to the alarm of fidgety neighbours. An invitation followed shortly for a cruise in the Channel in a fishing-boat, which Hunt, fond of all manly activities, was anxious to accept if he could but procure sufficient money for his journey to the coast. A happy thought struck him; he would try to sell for a few pounds a copy which he made of a picture in the National Gallery. So, for once in a while overcoming his native pride, he set off with the picture under his arm and paid calls at houses with "the distinctive coat-of-arms." He describes the experiment as extremely salutary for a young painter "whose experience is only of the appreciation of near friends"; the painting was examined by the worthy

gentlemen to whom it was shown as though it were a piece of costly wood submitted to them for their approval and they wished to test the quality of it; they did not look at it from straight in front and at the right distance, but peered along the surface of it, holding it out with one hand as though it were a tennis racket, and then returned it to the owner with the information that the article was not in their line. "Eventually in the Borough," says Hunt, "with abated pride, I felt quite dishonest at closing with a rash admirer who advanced 8s. 6d. for the custody of the despised thing." However, the little sum enabled him to get to the sea, and the cruise with his wealthy friend amply justified the trouble undergone to achieve it. Not so happy, however, was the sequel.

One day in his studio he was visited by Smith, the introducer of the gentleman of fortune. This time his visit was purely a business one. Warwick was in difficulties with the lawyers, who would not pay him a large legacy left by a wealthy relative, and, strange to say, he was in need of pocket-money. Naturally he did not wish to sell out any of his extensive investments, so he had asked Smith to lend him five pounds just for a day or two. Smith preferred to lend other people's money rather than his own, and begged that Hunt would supply the five pounds, which the latter, now having a little ready money, consented to do, thereby seriously diminishing his rapidly disappearing funds.

Ten days after the money had been handed to Smith and passed on by him to Warwick, the latter paid a visit to Hunt. He overflowed with admiration of the gradually maturing *Valentine and Sylvia*, and then changing the subject touched upon his own private affairs, which were still, so it appeared, far from being settled. However, the legacy

would be paid in eight days, and in the meantime would Hunt lend him fifteen pounds? The request alarmed the painter, and he thought fit to explain that in his desk were thirty sovereigns, which were all that he possessed in the world, and which, allowing for payment for models, picture-frame and rent, would little more than suffice until the picture was finished. The fifteen pounds could be lent only provided that Warwick was sure that he would return it in three weeks. Of course he would. In fact the money should be repaid in less than ten days. He would sell all his household possessions rather than keep Hunt an hour beyond the date fixed. The sovereigns were counted out and the man of fortune departed in boisterously good humour.

Three weeks elapsed without a word from the borrower, and Hunt decided to write to him. No reply came; the figure-painting of *Valentine and Sylvia* arrived at a standstill through lack of funds for the payment of models. Time passed, and Hunt looked at his unfinished picture with feelings of blank despair. One day, who should appear at the studio but Warwick himself! He was full of apologies, but put the whole blame down to the lawyers. To make a long story short, the fifteen pounds were never recovered. The borrower was heard of later in connection with an invention for an improved system of snuffing candles and a new form of advertising; news also came of his doings in the gambling-dens of the West End, and later he was reported to have become an engineer and gone to Australia to manage a mine; this enterprise failed like all the rest, and he passed into oblivion.

By a superhuman effort the *Valentine and Sylvia* was completed in time for the Academy, where it was exhibited in May, 1851, in an unfavourable position.

Once more the Pre-Raphaelites drew upon themselves a storm of uncontrolled abuse from the press and the public, who were now triumphant at having, as they imagined, put an end to the reform movement. But let the critics say what they like, some of the painters, who were a good deal more entitled to criticize than those who had little or no practical acquaintance with the art, regarded the pictures of Hunt and Millais with thoughtful attention and expressed the profoundest admiration for them. Among these painters was Madox Brown, who, in a letter of generous praise to Hunt, said that he was tempted to abandon his own style in favour of that of the Pre-Raphaelites, and would certainly do so were he younger and more easily able to face the consequences of public misunderstanding and abuse. "Your picture," he wrote, "makes me feel shame that I have not done more in all the years I have worked. You will now have one long course of triumph, I believe—well you deserve it. Your picture seems to me without fault and beautiful to its minutest detail, and I do not think that there is a man in England that could do a finer work; it is fine all over. . . . I mean to be much more careful in future, and try next time to *satisfy myself*."

But the consensus of public opinion carries more weight, at the time of its expression, than does the judgment of the intelligent minority, though the words of the few remain when the shouts of the multitude have died away. The fortunes of Hunt and his friends were being seriously affected by the blind rage of the journalists and the whole mass of the public whose opinion is based upon whatever the former may choose to say. One student, an acquaintance, sent a message to Millais to say that he "would be cut in the street when next they met." A professor lecturing to a class at the Academy reviled the Pre-Raphaelites with

such evident injustice that some of the students gave voice to their dissent. Macaulay wrote : " Pre-Raphaelitism is spreading, I am glad to see ; glad, because it is by spreading that such affectations perish." And Kingsley uttered some equally wise words which are not worth repeating.

The result of all this ferment of ignorant abuse was that Hunt could find no one who would buy his work, and met with insult and discouragement on every hand. He was already in debt, which was increasing daily, and could therefore not meet the expenses incidental to his profession ; work, therefore, came to a standstill, and his prospects had never before been so black ; in fact, this time, he was on the point of abandoning art in favour of some occupation that would provide him with a livelihood ; would, indeed, have done so had not the voice of justice at this moment of utter despair risen above the babble of the ignorant.

Ruskin's father had shown admiration for Pre-Raphaelite work by wishing to buy a picture of Millais, and this encouraged Patmore to suggest that the younger Ruskin should publish his opinion of the movement.¹ The suggestion bore fruit, and on the 13th May a letter from Ruskin appeared in the *Times*. One of the journalistic criticisms had been that the Pre-Raphaelite drapery was *snapped* instead of folded ; Ruskin said, " Putting aside the small Mulready, and the works of Thorburn and Sir W. Ross, there is not a single study of drapery, be it in large works or small, which for perfect truth, power, and finish could be compared for an instant with the black sleeve of the Julia, or with the velvet on the breast and chain mail of the Valentine of Mr. Hunt's picture." And he continued later, " As studies both of drapery and of every minor

¹ *P.R.B. Journal*, 8th and 12th May, 1851. A slightly different account is given by Cook in his *Life of Ruskin*.

detail, there has been nothing in art so earnest or so complete as these pictures since the days of Albert Dürer." In the same, as well as in a later, letter he points out some of the weaknesses of the paintings, chief of which was "commonness of feature," which, he maintained, was almost the only fault in *Valentine and Sylvia*. He then speaks of the "marvellous truth in detail and splendour in colour" of this picture; and, after further praise, adds, "But all this thoughtful conception, and absolutely inimitable execution, fail in making immediate appeal to the feelings, owing to the unfortunate type chosen for the face of Sylvia." No compliment, this, to the model, Miss Siddal, but Hunt explains that the affair with Warwick had prevented his doing justice to the young lady. In conclusion Ruskin expressed a belief that if the Pre-Raphaelites could withstand "harsh and careless criticism," they might "lay in our England the foundations of a school of Art nobler than the world has seen for three hundred years."

Carlyle's homely comment on the movement was: "These Pre-Raphaelites they talk of are said to copy the thing as it is, or invent it as they believe it must have been: now there's some sense and hearty sincerity in this. It's the only way of doing anything fit to be seen."

After Ruskin's second letter had appeared in the *Times*, Hunt and Millais wrote to thank him for his support; on the following day Ruskin and his wife drove to Millais' house, and thus was begun his acquaintance with the Pre-Raphaelites. But the turn of the tide brought about by Ruskin's championship did not immediately affect Hunt's prospects. No one appeared to wish to buy his picture, and now that his means were exhausted he actually decided to abandon the artistic career. He had done his best to make the world understand his work and to raise the level

of art, but life could not continue without the means of subsistence, and all that could now be done was to retire from the scene. The painter, William Dyce, had offered to engage him as assistant, but such a subordinate position was impossible to him. One of the courses which he thought of adopting was to emigrate to one of the colonies as a breeder of cattle. "I comforted my bereaved self," he says, "with visions of the old settler in the decline of life having children about him, each of whom, with their mother, should be painted by his hand, the pictures to be ranged in the backwood home, and to be handed down as heirlooms in the banished family." His vision of the portraits of his children was indeed to become a reality, but under better circumstances than he could imagine at this time.

He revealed his thoughts to his best friend Millais, who strenuously opposed such desperate schemes, and generously pressed money upon him, which Hunt firmly refused until urged by Millais' parents to accept the offer. Money was all that was needed to enable work to proceed, and although he was to continue to face poverty, the generosity of his friend marked the beginning of a new era for him. His work was undoubtedly gaining in power, and public scorn and ridicule were changing to respectful criticism. Although unfortunate in the faces of his figures, he was gradually perfecting his drawing and colouring of natural objects. His landscape work was not confined mainly to the studio, but was done in the open air, in front of nature herself, with the actual colours and forms before him. He was learning more and more to represent the subtle colouring of objects seen in sunlight, and the result was a brilliance of effect unequalled by the earlier landscape painters, with the exception of Turner. Ruskin was the first to point out that

one vital difference between the Pre-Raphaelites and their imitators (and they were beginning to be imitated at the time which we have now reached) was to be found in the rendering of detail. The imitators were wont, for instance, to paint foliage generally as though each individual leaf were clearly seen in nature, whereas the Pre-Raphaelites did so only in the nearest foliage, giving to the rest no more clearness of definition than appears in the scene itself, where the lesser details unite in indistinct masses and must be suggested rather than minutely represented. But when they were obliged to give a clear rendering of detail on account of its proximity to the spectator, they did so with the conscientiousness of the old masters ; and as examples of the minuteness attained in Hunt's work when occasion required, the exquisitely painted toad-stools and fallen beech leaves on the foreground of *Valentine and Sylvia* should be closely studied. In real life such small objects could not fail to be seen in all their detail by a near spectator of the action of the figures ; for by an unconscious and instantaneous rotary movement the eye invariably embraces considerably more of a particular scene than its principal objects ; it would, indeed, be untrue to nature to paint with complete definition only the principal features, as though the eye possessed no more mobility than a fixed telescope.

The particular delicacy and purity of colouring that characterizes the work of the Pre-Raphaelites was the result of a method adopted independently by Hunt and Millais, namely that of painting over a ground of wet white. This system resulted in a brilliancy which made other paintings look dull in comparison, and the two painters had decided to keep the process a secret, when, on the impulse of the moment, Millais gave a full account of it to Madox Brown, who wrote in May, 1851, to Lowes Dickinson : " As to the

pure white ground, you had better adopt that at once, as I can assure you you will be forced to do so ultimately, for Hunt and Millais, whose works already kill everything on the exhibition for brilliancy, will, in a few years force everyone who will not drop behind them to use their methods.”¹

¹ Hueffer's *Life of F. Madox Brown*, Ch. V.

VI

WORK AND HAPPY INTERCOURSE

1851 TO 1852

MILLAIS had decided upon the picture *Ophelia* as his next work, and Hunt his *Hireling Shepherd*, to secure backgrounds for which suitable landscapes had to be sought out. The then delightfully rural surroundings of Surbiton were chosen; and, having engaged lodgings here, the two set to work in July, 1851,¹ removing a few months later to Worcester Park Farm, which had been originally built as a hunting-box for one of the courtesans of Charles II. Millais had now virtually lost touch with Rossetti and regretted the latter's failure to follow up the Pre-Raphaelite ideal, in place of which Rossetti was devoting himself more and more, to use Millais' words, to the "quaintness derived from the works of past men"; both Millais and Hunt had lost all interest in the backward members of the Brotherhood, Hunt's conclusion being that it was best to "let the nominal Body drift, and while we are working we must hope that true men will collect, and with these we may make a genuine artistic brotherhood, if discreetly chosen."

In the meantime, Brown, after innumerable changes of manner, had, in his painting entitled *Pretty Baa Lambs*, made himself a disciple of Hunt and his colleague. "The *Baa Lamb* picture," he notes in his diary, "was painted almost entirely in sunlight, which twice gave me a fever while painting. I used to take the lay figure out every

¹ For further details of this sojourn see the *Life of Millais* by his son, Vol. I, Ch. IV.

morning, and bring it in at night or if it rained. . . . The lambs and sheep used to be brought every morning from Clapham Common in a truck: one of them ate up all the flowers one morning in the garden, where they used to behave very ill. The background was painted on the Common." Several years later, in September, 1854, Brown was still struggling with a style he had not succeeded in mastering, for a diary-entry runs: "To the Brent by half-past nine: worked well till half-past one. Begins to look bravely, and beautiful colour; but still requires all my energy and attention to master the difficulties attending a style of work I have not been bred to. . . . After dinner to the corn-field for about three hours; interrupted by a shower, and somehow did very little. Altogether these little landscapes take up too much time to be profitable." The *Baa Lambs* picture was the first that Brown had painted out-of-doors, and the above references to his work are interesting as showing the painter's profound admiration for Pre-Raphaelitism—an admiration which had passed beyond the stage of eulogium to that of imitation. Early training, however, is a powerful influence, and in Brown's case it refused to be supplanted.

In August Hunt's *Valentine and Sylvia* was removed from the Academy and sent by him to the Exhibition at Liverpool, where a prize of fifty pounds had been offered for the painting judged to be the best. In spite of much public abuse the prize was awarded to him—a triumph which greatly inspirited both himself and his colleagues, though the usual difficulties attended the sale of the picture, and before long the painter was once more struggling beneath the burden of debt. Had he but known it, he had now reached a critical point in his career; the scales were about to turn, though slowly, and a mere trifling

circumstance might have diverted him from his greatest achievements. Anxious to put an end to the eternal shortage of money he applied for the post of draughtsman then vacant in Layard's explorations at Ninevah. The reply was that his application had arrived a day too late; had it been received in time he would have been accepted. Millais refers to the occasion in a letter to Mrs. Combe (22nd November, 1851): "Layard, the winged-bull discoverer, requires an artist with him (salary two hundred a year) and has applied for one at the School of Design, Somerset House. Hunt is going to-night to see about it, as, should there be intervals of time at his disposal for painting pictures, he would not dislike the notion. One inducement to him would be that there, as at Jerusalem, he could illustrate Biblical history. Should the appointment require immediate filling, he could not take it, as the work he is now about cannot be finished till March."

Charles Collins, brother of Wilkie Collins and later the husband of one of Dickens' daughters, had joined Hunt and Millais in their country retreat, and in the late autumn evenings the party was a happy one, except for the fact that Millais was untiring in his sneers at the "high-church" tendencies of Collins, whom he taunted with more persistence than good taste, until even Hunt turned away in weariness from his friend.

It was at this time that the first idea of *The Light of the World* dawned upon his mind. It originated in the words of the *Revelation*, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," and by good fortune a suitable scene was discovered near the farm in which he was staying; so that, before the completion of *The Hireling Shepherd*, he was able to begin upon this new work. In the late autumn he began to paint by night in the orchard, establishing himself in a little shelter built

of straw and hurdles, where he protected his feet from the cold by placing them in a sack of straw. The occasion is referred to in some diary notes of Millais, who writes (7th November, 1851): "During the day Hunt had a straw hut similar to mine built, to paint a moonlight background to the fresh canvas. Twelve o'clock. Have this moment left him in it, cheerfully working by a lantern from some contorted apple tree trunks, washed with the phosphor light of a perfect moon—the shadows of the branches stained upon the sward. Steady sparks of moon-struck dew." The nights were many of them bitterly cold, as was testified by the fact that during the day skating was in progress in the valley below. Moonlit nights were, of course, chosen, and to light him in his work he used a candle. He began at about nine p.m., and continued until five, when he went to bed until ten a.m., afterwards devoting himself to the correction of the work already done and the drawing necessary for the night that was to follow. At other times during the day he applied himself to *The Hireling Shepherd*.

His own description of his first night out-of-doors is graphic and entertaining. "The handsome avenue in front of the farm," he writes, "was, of course, known to be haunted. I promised to be on my guard against the *shameless duchess* or any of her crew, that they should have no excuse for taking away my character. For an hour the stillness was chequered by the going in and out of farm servants, then my friends came out ere they retired to sleep and chatted with me, wrapped against the cold. Shortly after, the lights seen through the windows were extinguished one by one, and a quiet, deep sense of solitude reigned over all. The noises of life ceased save the draggling pulsation of the powder mill down in the vale below, whose measured beating timed the black night. I plied my brush busily, in

turn warming my numbed fingers in my breast. About midnight I could hear that there was another noise, like the rustling of dead leaves, and this grew more distinct, evidently coming nearer as I paused to listen, but the road trodden by the thing of night was hidden from me. Yet I could not the less certainly measure the distance of the waves of disturbed dried leaves. The steps had arrived at the face of the house, and now were turning aside to the orchard, where soon, indeed, I could see a hundred yards off a mysterious presence. I shouted out, 'Tell me who you are!' A flash of light shot across the orchard, and then with solemn step the village policeman approached. 'I thought you were the ghost,' I said. 'Well, to tell the truth, sir, that was what I thought of you.' Henceforth he was a nightly visitor and accepted my tobacco while he chatted to me for half an hour. When I asked him whether he had seen other artists painting landscapes in the neighbourhood his reply was, 'I can't exactly say as I have at this time o' night.' "

When the year drew to an end the painters bade farewell to their lodgings and returned to London. A period of happy comradeship was now over, and, although Millais and Hunt remained the closest of friends until the death of the former, the artistic aims of the two were destined to diverge. The desire for the material comforts of life was to become uppermost in Millais' mind; he was not content to pursue his youthful ideals unless the toil which the pursuit of them necessarily entailed brought its due reward in the form of hard cash; it did not, and he chose a lower line. I think that Hunt must have felt even deeper regrets than he expressed when he wrote, "Never did we live again together in such daily spirit-stirring emulation. I feel this deeply in my old age when I alone am left of the band who

worked together with so much mutual love and aspiration." In an important sense he was left alone long before the separation by death took place.

That delightful couple, Mr. and Mrs. Combe, of Oxford, had for some time shown the keenest interest in Pre-Raphaelite work. They had become personally acquainted with Hunt as the result of a visit to him in the country during the beginnings of *The Light of the World*, by which they were not a little impressed, and now they invited him to spend Christmas with them at Oxford—an invitation which was readily accepted. "They were surely 'the salt of the earth' to a large circle," writes Hunt; and he describes them as "two of the most unpretending servants of goodness and nobility that their generation knew." It was not without some degree of nervousness that he paid this first visit to Oxford, for he realized that he would for the first time in his life be brought into touch with dons and learned dignitaries. He feared their "stiff exclusiveness," and was therefore the more surprised and gratified by the welcome which he received and by the invitations that showered upon him from the learned elders, each of whom seemed to have "put on his suit of youth."

The happy sojourn was, however, not without its awkward moments. At a college breakfast one morning, when many dons were present, he was asked quietly by his neighbour to reveal the true purpose of Pre-Raphaelitism. This he did in confidential tones; but before he had finished his discourse he found that his other neighbour had turned to listen, and likewise, shortly, the next but one to him. To find his private conversation gradually assuming the character of a public utterance was somewhat disconcerting to the young painter. "From a lingering bashfulness of youth," he says, "I felt the more need of hushed privacy

in my discourse, till suddenly there was a distinct turn all along the table, and a doctor from afar in the most sedately polite manner asked whether I would have the kindness to speak somewhat louder, as he was sure he was not alone in wishing to hear an exposition of Pre-Raphaelitism. Oh, modest reader, did you ever in youth have such an experience? If so, add to your own cause of trepidation the many that I had in all the irregularity of my education, and imagine my tremor in unexpectedly finding myself discoursing to more than a dozen of the most learned of the University. For a moment I wavered, but a supreme effort sent me on once more, in a bungling manner, doubtless; the proposition that had to be urged was that while artists must ever be beholden to examples from the past for their tuition, the theme that they treat must ever be new, or they must make it so by an infiltration of thoughts belonging to their own time. In our art, as in all others of the ever advancing human mind, there are continually new prizes to be found.

The fair new forms,
That float about the threshold of an age,
Like truths of science waiting to be caught—
Catch me who can, and make the catcher crown'd—

“ ‘Stop, pray,’ said a don, ‘please tell us whom you quote?’ ”

“ ‘I was quoting a passage from Tennyson’s *Golden Year*, which expresses my meaning better than anything I could say,’ I replied.

“ ‘Tennyson!’ was the chorus from several voices. ‘You don’t regard Tennyson as a poet!’ ”

Hunt remarks that out of all those whose acquaintance he made at Oxford there was but one who agreed with his

admiration of Tennyson; and that later he came to be regarded as more eccentric in his championing of the poet than in his defences of Pre-Raphaelitism.

The Hireling Shepherd was ready in time for the Academy Exhibition of 1852, was the first of his works to be hung on the line, and won many converts on the varnishing morning. It was sold somewhat later for three hundred guineas, and Hunt was commissioned to paint another picture for which seventy guineas was agreed upon. Never before had fortune so smiled upon him. Not only was he able to continue his work without the pain of continually wondering how the money for his food and rent was to be provided, but he could now discharge the remainder of his debt to Millais. During his sojourn in the country he had agreed to receive as pupil R. B. Martineau, who had heard of his successful training of Rossetti and was himself anxious to benefit in the same manner, persevering in his intention in spite of Hunt's warning that, far from producing wealth, painting in England was scarcely a *profession* at all. And it was through Martineau that he was now brought into touch with the genial, humorous Edward Lear, whose mirth and whimsicality entertained and attracted him in no small degree.

Lear was worried by the fact that he was unable to carry out in oil the subjects of his drawings. He had tried repeatedly to do so in his studio, but had as often broken down in despair. Hunt's advice was prompt and to the point. It was useless to attempt to paint from nature in the studio. The scenes which he wished to represent must be taken from the landscape itself, with its rocks, trees, fields, hills, sky and clouds. Lear was delighted with the suggestion, and, as Hunt was then on the point of visiting the cliffs at Fairlight near Hastings to find a setting for his

next work, it was agreed that the two should go together and share lodgings. They parted on the understanding that Lear should be responsible for the finding of these lodgings; and in a couple of days Hunt received word that suitable accommodation was available at Clivedale Farm; did he agree to the rent? The reply was in the affirmative, the house was engaged, and Lear was the first to occupy it. But before Hunt had set out an odd letter came from the other. Lear had suddenly been seized with misgivings as to the advisability of the two living together. It was unwise, he said, to act on the impulse of the moment, and now he felt that precautions should at once be taken to avoid mutual discord; in other words, the house must be divided, and each must have his own sitting-room and meet the other at meals only. Hunt replied in full agreement with this new arrangement, and in due course (August, 1852) arrived at the farm in the company of William Rossetti, who was on a week's holiday. "It was curious," says Hunt, "to see the unexpected guardedness of Lear's reception of us, but he gradually thawed, and by the end of dinner he was laughing and telling good stories. When the cloth was cleared, he said, 'Now I had intended to go to my own room, but, if you do not mind, I'll bring down some of my drawings and pen them out here, so that we may all be together.'" Thus ended all ideas of seclusion, and the proposed division of the house soon became a joke, which elicited from Lear an explanation of the whole manœuvre. It appeared that he had a horror of dogs both great and small, and, whilst alone in the house, had suddenly conceived the notion that Hunt might possibly be a great lover of bulldogs, and that he might arrive in the company of two of these fierce animals. Dreading such a possibility, Lear had decided to safeguard his person by making sure that in an

emergency he would be able to take refuge in his own domain.

The family of R. B. Martineau happened to live near by, and to the discomfiture of Lear they possessed a large Newfoundland dog, who, when taken out, was in the habit of leaping up by way of request that a stick or a stone might be thrown for him to chase. "To Lear," says Hunt, "a man of nearly six feet, with shoulders in width equal to those of Odysseus, the freaks of this dog were truly exasperating. 'How can the family,' said he, 'ask me to call upon them when they keep a raging animal like that, who has ever his jaws wide open and his teeth ready to tear helpless strangers to pieces? . . . such monsters should not be allowed to go at large.' "

Not long after the two had settled down to their work, Millais wrote to announce his intention of spending a week-end with them. Lear immediately grew inquisitive as to what this now famous painter was like, and such a glowing account did Hunt give of his friend that Lear declared that he was indeed fit to bring in the "Millaisneum" of art. "But," enquired the cautious Lear, "is he disposed to lord it over others? "

"Well," replied Hunt, "you know there are men who are good-nature itself, but who have a knack of always making others carry their parcels."

"Oh, but I won't carry his," said the other.

"Yes, you will," was the rejoinder. "You won't be able to refuse."

Millais arrived at the appointed time, and on the Sunday the party made an excursion on foot to Winchelsea and Rye. On the beach near the Fairlight Cliffs they came across some cuttlefish bones in good condition, and Millais, with an eye to his art, determined to take them home in spite of

Hunt's argument that with the Pre-Raphaelite system of painting they were hardly necessary. He wrapped them in a large handkerchief, and the party continued on its way. But scarcely had ten minutes passed than Millais, child at heart that he was, grew tired of carrying his burden. Approaching Hunt he said coaxingly, "I say, carry these for me now, like a good fellow, do."

"I am not going to spoil you," said Hunt. "I will put them down here; no one will take them, and you can get them on our return, or carry them yourself, my dear boy."

Millais refused to allow this to be done and could not understand why Lear was hopelessly overcome with laughter.

"You carry it for me, King Lear," said he innocently; and this completed the explosion of merriment.

Convulsed with laughter Lear undertook to carry the bundle, and the expression, "He doesn't carry his own cuttlefish," hereafter became a proverb among the three friends.

Lear was an ardent admirer of Hunt's works, and always spoke of him as his artistic father and of Millais as his artistic uncle, regarding himself as a Pre-Raphaelite of the second generation. In 1858 he travelled over a good deal of the ground covered by Hunt on his visit to Palestine several years before that date, and when he returned to England he was much gratified by the latter's approval of his sketches made at Jerusalem and near the Dead Sea. A comment of his in a letter to Chichester Fortescue dated the 2nd June, 1859, about Hunt and Millais, is worth quoting on account of the truth contained in it: "I should gladly see Millais's worx,¹ but do not greatly expect to like them. I am quite aware of the qualities of his mind, which I do not apprehend are of the progressive nature, as are

¹ Lear was addicted to many quaintnesses of orthography.

Holman Hunt's : but his power and technical go, I have no doubt are wonderful." Lear was considerably older than Hunt, and had in 1846, before Pre-Raphaelitism had come into being, given drawing-lessons to Queen Victoria.

To return to our subject, an amusing incident is related by Hunt to have taken place somewhat later than Millais' visit. Unable to paint, one calm misty morning, Hunt sat on his rug near the cliff and began to read, but was disturbed by a visitor who carried in his hand a canvas and a large easel, thereby showing himself to be a painter. The latter remarked that it was a fine morning, and Hunt replied curtly, hoping that the newcomer would pass on. The intruder, however, had evidently come to stay, for he enquired whether Hunt was sketching in oil or water-colour, to which the other replied that he was trying his hand with oils when the weather allowed ; and then the stranger went on to observe that many distinguished artists had been working of late in that neighbourhood ; Clint had left only last week ; did Hunt know him ? " By name," replied Hunt. Tom Danby had also been there sketching ; Hunt was questioned as to whether he knew him, and replied in the affirmative, adding that he possessed a picture by him. This seemed to raise Hunt in the estimation of the visitor, who, despite the other's evident desire to continue his reading, persisted in his references to various celebrated artists. After keeping silence as long as he could, Hunt remarked upon the fact that of late years painters were becoming more in the habit of working direct from nature.

" Yes," was the reply, " all but the Pre-Raphaelites."

" Oh !" said our Pre-Raphaelite. " I have been given to understand that *they* make a principle of doing everything from nature."

" That's their humbug," explained the learned artist ;

"they try to make ignorant people believe it; but, in fact, they do everything in their own studios."

"Well," came from the other, now fully roused, "I have been assured positively that, whatever their failings and incapacity, they do give themselves the chance of getting at truth by going to the fountain-head, so your statement to the contrary surprises me. May I ask whether you speak from heresay or from your own knowledge? For indeed, I was really made to believe that Millais and Holman Hunt, with Collins, were living together last summer in Surrey, and that there they painted the *Ophelia*, *The Huguenot* and *The Hireling Shepherd*, which were in the Academy this year."

"Not a word of truth in it; you have been entirely imposed upon. I know them as well as I know myself."

"Personally?"

"Yes, and they are all thorough charlatans. Don't you know how they do their landscapes? I will tell you. I've seen them do it. When they want to paint a tree they have one single leaf brought to them, and a piece of the bark, and they go on repeating these until they have completed their Brummagem tree. They paint a field in the same manner, repeating one single blade of grass until the whole space is covered; and they call that nature. Once, indeed, I did see the root of a tree fresh from the ground taken into Millais' studio."

"By Jupiter!" ejaculated Hunt, "I am quite surprised to learn that they are such barefaced imposters."

The other then went on his way, expressing pleasure that he had been enabled to undeceive his ignorant acquaintance, and calling back after he had gone a little distance, "You may take my word for that." Hunt experienced no little satisfaction in speculating upon the feelings of his informer when at the Academy Exhibition of the coming year his eye should light upon his present picture.

VII

FIRST RECOGNITION

1853 TO 1854

THE picture painted at the Fairlight Cliffs was entitled *Strayed Sheep*. Although seventy guineas had been the price originally agreed upon, in view of an unforeseen increase in the size of the picture and the additional labour expended upon it, the purchaser offered £120 as payment. In 1853 it gained the £60 prize at Birmingham.

A word or two as to this picture and *The Hireling Shepherd*, which mark an important period in Hunt's artistic development, will show how far at this stage his symbolism had grown. All the best art has a profound thought behind it; it is impossible, therefore, to understand the work of a great painter unless sufficient study is given to his meaning. In *The Hireling Shepherd* (of which two versions were painted) we have a shepherd with his lass, a disorderly group of sheep, part of a field of growing corn, the bed of a stream beneath an avenue of pollarded trees, a further landscape of trees and fields, and in the immediate foreground a group of wild plants and flowers exquisitely painted. This typical rural scene, with its glow of sunlight, brightness of colouring and blue shadows, is lovely in itself as a true transcript of nature, and lights up the room in which it hangs, but the best art requires more than the representation of external objects. The principal thought which the painter wishes to convey is that of the implied contrast between the Good Shepherd and the hireling, and in this respect the picture is important as being the first



THE HIRELING SHEPHERD
Manchester City Art Gallery

of Hunt's works whose inner meaning was essentially religious. Instead of devoting his time to his flock, this hireling shepherd is idling with his lass, whilst the sheep are allowed to remain unguarded, and the field of standing unripe corn (harmful food for sheep) is left exposed to their depredations, which have already begun, some of the sheep being visible among the corn itself, whilst others are making their way towards it across the almost dried-up stream and the remainder of the flock about to follow their example. On the girl's lap is a lamb, and near it two unripe apples, one already bitten, carelessly placed there for the lamb to eat—a hint as to the character of the girl. The shepherd has caught a moth in his hand, and this in itself is symbolical, being a death's-head moth. A dog alone (in one of the versions) is alert and conscious of the increasing disorder of the flock. Regarded in a wider sense the moral of this picture may be applied to the world at large. Human affairs are characterized by perpetual disorder because of the tendency of individuals to ignore their most important duties—those which consist in the service of others—and, instead, to concentrate their thoughts upon selfish and useless pleasures. Restraint becomes irksome, the important matters of life are forgotten since pleasure and amusement have usurped their place; and while the mind is absorbed in trifles, essentials are becoming more and more neglected, until irreparable harm is done to society, and until the disorder produced by lack of restraint constitutes a problem with which no government can deal. As to the immediate purpose of the picture, to use Hunt's own words, it was intended to be a "rebuke of the sectarian vanities and vital negligences of the day."

Similar ideas are hinted at in *Strayed Sheep*, though this picture, which as has been seen was commissioned when

The Hireling Shepherd was sold, was painted principally for the external beauties of nature, which are here represented with extraordinary power. In order to grasp its true position in the history of art, the fact must be realized that before Hunt's day the light and colouring of nature had been represented on canvas either incompletely or by conventional methods. Turner's magnificent transcripts of nature are, as Ruskin has rightly pointed out, wholly unintelligible to many on account of the boldness of his conventionalism in the representation of the colouring of sunlit landscapes ; and Claude's sunshine has no colour at all, being merely a golden haze. Hunt created an epoch in the history of art by depicting the true effect of sunshine, and Ruskin is undoubtedly correct when he says : " The apparently unimportant picture by Holman Hunt, *The Strayed Sheep* . . . at once achieved all that can ever be done in that kind : it will not be surpassed—it is little likely to be rivalled—by the best efforts of the times to come. It showed to us, for the first time in the history of art, the absolutely faithful balances of colour and shade by which actual sunshine might be transposed into a key in which the harmonies possible with material pigments should yet produce the same impressions upon the mind which were caused by the light itself. . . . The pure natural green and tufted gold of the herbage in the hollow of that little sea-cliff must be recognized for true merely by a minute's pause of attention. Standing long before the picture, you were soothed by it, and raised into such peace as you are intended to find in the glory and the stillness of summer, possessing all things."¹

It is not surprising that such pictures as these began to arouse admiration in the midst of a hitherto contemptuous public, as well as emulation among painters. " We had

¹ *The Art of England*, Lecture 1.

continual signs," writes Hunt, "that there was division in the camp of our enemies. Every exhibition contained examples of attempts to work from nature, in avowed, and still more often in unavowed, accordance with our principles, and the efforts made by professed adversaries to appear confident of our defeat were not always very impressive. Their curiosity to see our last production was not indicative of contempt." On the 23rd January, 1853, William Rossetti wrote in the *P.R.B. Journal*: "Our position is greatly altered. We have emerged from reckless abuse to a position of general and high recognition, just so much qualified by adverse criticism as suffices to keep our once would-be annihilators in countenance." And when Millais' *The Order of Release* was exhibited at the Academy in the same year it became clear that a further victory had been gained. "The whole world was beginning to waver," writes Hunt; "even the converted oracles guarded themselves against signs of too sudden a conversion."

At the 1853 Academy Exhibition Hunt's *Claudio and Isabella* was given an excellent place, and stirred up a good deal of admiration. Lord Grosvenor offered to purchase it for three hundred guineas, but the work had, as will be remembered, been commissioned by Augustus Egg in the days when Hunt's paintings were thought to be of little value. In spite of Egg's protests, Hunt insisted that the picture was his at the price originally agreed upon for a small picture. "Some years later," he writes, "I received, as a memento, an old-fashioned sideboard which had been turned out of Kensington Palace, and which he had wisely rescued; and we remained the dearest friends till he died. How I love now to call up his handsome, kindly face, sitting at table with his dear prism at his side!"

In the days of his friendship with Rossetti, back in 1848,

Hunt had expressed to the latter an idea he had in mind of visiting Syria in order to paint sacred subjects with more exact truth than could otherwise have been done. He contended that this additional truth "was distinctly called for by the additional knowledge and longings of the modern mind, and that it was not outside the lines of the noblest art." Rossetti, no doubt with the masterpieces of Italian art in mind, disagreed as to the necessity for seeking external accuracy in the representation of scriptural subjects, and went so far as to maintain that attention to costume, racial types, and other such details was calculated to destroy those subjects. The problem is an interesting one. One asks oneself whether, had Giotto, greatest among religious painters, possessed the additional knowledge and the longings of the modern mind, as well as the opportunity to paint his subjects in the Holy Land, his works would have been nobler or less noble—whether the superb simplicity of his treatment would thereby have suffered, or the strain of attention to scientific accuracy have confused his vision of something which was above costume and racial characteristics; and how far this loss of vision, had it resulted, would have affected his power of design and composition. Giotto's most moving language comes from his magical power of composing his pictures in such a way that the very disposition of his lines and masses convey their stirring message to minds that understand. This extraordinary gift of composition, when joined to his fine sense of colour and proportion, constitutes the true greatness of Giotto's art, and the essential significance of his scriptural subjects is expressed without the least need of truth in external detail.

But without pursuing this side of the question let us see what Hunt himself has to say in defence of his departure

for the East, which is shortly to take place. He related to Egg that the plan of visiting Syria had originated when he was a boy at school listening to the lessons from the New Testament. Ever since those early days he had felt the most profound reverence for the gospel narrative; and this, coupled with his conviction "that truth, whatever it be, is above all price," strengthened his desire to use his powers "to make more tangible Jesus Christ's history and teaching." There was every reason to believe, he said, that the divine intention was "that every generation should contribute its quota of knowledge and wisdom to attain the final purpose; and however small my mite may be, I wish to do my poor part, and in pursuing this aim I ought not surely to serve art less perfectly." There is a sublime humility in these words which disarms criticism and raises Hunt far above his brother painters. Egg had been beseeching him not to go abroad, and Ruskin, when he heard of the project, tried to convince him that his true work in life was to establish and train a new school of artists in England. Sympathize though one must with Ruskin's argument, in the belief that the best soil for art to grow out of is that of its native land, one is led by Hunt's simple honesty to affirm that, despite the apparent disadvantages of such a plan, he did well to follow the dictates of his own conscience.

One incident which served to strengthen his intention ought not to be passed without mention. On the opening day of the 1852 Academy Exhibition he happened to have been standing near a group of authoritative critics who were talking in loud tones, and among whom was one who had been a bitter enemy of Pre-Raphaelitism. Someone said to the latter, "Well, it seems as though P.R.B. are looking up"; but the grudging reply was, "Millais is decidedly coming forward, but I hate his followers." This remark,

made among complete strangers, had brought home emphatically enough to Hunt's mind the unhappy truth that the Pre-Raphaelites had come to be regarded as a narrow sect led by a single painter. In reality Hunt himself had inspired the whole movement; and he now became the more anxious to demonstrate by his actions that "P.R.B.-ism was of wide application, and that each expounder of its principles could find regions for enterprise which would show even to the least reflective that amongst the originators there was no following of one by the other." He had already spoken vaguely to Millais of his intention of travelling to the East, but from now onwards his plans for the enterprise took a more definite shape.

One or two interesting events took place early in 1853. At about the end of the preceding year he had been elected as one of the original members of the Cosmopolitan Club, which established itself at 30 Charles Street, Berkeley Square, where G. F. Watts had his studio from 1849 to 1852. Among other famous men Hunt here met Thackeray, whose books he had read with profound interest and the keenest admiration for their author. "I looked at him," writes Hunt, "with hardly concealed awe, but his manner seemed to withdraw demand for such homage for him. Surveying his six feet of somewhat burly build standing there with his hands in pockets, it was impossible not to class him in type with others of past ages who had been daring proclaimers of a new perfection. That broad and soaring cranium, that short nose, that full face, with large eyes and well-advanced chin, made him brother to Socrates, Tintoretto, Hobbes, Sobieski and Hogarth, who each denounced the corruption of his time."

He also met Layard, whose expedition in Mesopotamia he had at one time hoped to join, and who, interested to hear

he was now himself on the point of travelling in the East, furnished him with letters of introduction to several officials of high standing in the regions he was planning to visit, as well as with advice in connection with eastern travel.

A happy and amusing expedition with Millais took place in the May of this year. The two decided to go to the Epsom races, and Millais' account of their doings shows that they were still boys together. He writes in a letter to Charles Collins: "After coffee we spoke of the morrow's dust we should have to encounter, when it struck me that if we could obtain countrymen's white smockfrocks we could wear them there, defying the dust, and put on our swell coats, unsullied, on arriving at the course.

"To procure these agricultural robes, measures were immediately put into execution. The maidservant, who was also going to the races in a van, undertook to get them before we were up, which promise she fulfilled.

"In case Hunt should have difficulty in finding his way from Wimbledon across the fields, I walked there just in time to meet his train. From this he emerged much depressed in body and spirit, having, in fear of missing the hour, carefully avoided sleep.

"We started in our ploughmen attire at about twelve o'clock. . . . Our costumes excited much jocularly of a most depressing order, such as enquiries as to price of turnips and milk, etc. On arrival we exchanged the rustic for the ordinary garment, and were recognised by many friends."¹

We are not told of Hunt's opinion of this popular annual amusement, but Millais came to the conclusion that the crowds attended "principally for the sake of gorging themselves with pigeon pie and lobster salad," an aspect of the

¹ *The Life of J. E. Millais*, by his son, Vol. I, Ch. VI.

racers which would doubtless have appealed to Dickens.

In the meantime more serious matters were taking place in the gradual maturing of Hunt's *The Light of the World* and *The Awakened Conscience*, the latter of which was not finished until January, 1854, immediately before his departure for Egypt. The toil and vicissitudes of past years had by no means quelled Hunt's native gaiety, for W. Bell Scott, becoming intimately acquainted with him at this time, was astonished at the contrast between the man as imagined from his pictures and the man in real life. He had expected to find him sedate and taciturn, but in a sculling expedition on the Thames was greatly entertained by the irrepressibility of his mirth and the uproariousness of his humour. He refers in his *Autobiography* (Vol. I, Ch. xxiii) to a visit to Hunt's studio at about the date we have reached: "In 1853, if I remember right, Holman Hunt was painting *The Light of the World*. I found him so employed, in a small drawing-room in the corner house near the old church of Chelsea, with an elaborate arrangement of screens and curtains so as to get the dark effect he wanted. The lay figure held a lighted lantern, and Hunt, painting by good daylight in the further part of the room, peered into the mysterious gloom by a hole. The arrangement had a bogey effect, and the amount of exercise made it the pursuit of painting under difficulties certainly." And he goes on to mention the boating expedition already referred to: "He was at that time, however, a Hercules, though not a giant, and after an economical dinner of savoury fish and ginger beer which my long walk made excellent, evening coming on, we crossed the street and jumped into a wherry, the management of which he was quite accustomed to, and he pulled me up to Hammersmith and back again."

Rumours about *The Light of the World* and *The Awakened*

Conscience had aroused a good deal of curiosity, and Hunt received visits from several important people who were anxious to see his work, including Carlyle and his wife, whose house in Chelsea was not far from that in which Hunt lived. The latter had always been a hearty admirer of the genius of the Chelsea sage, whose person he had had the good fortune to see "rambling along the streets of the neighbourhood, bent down, as it seemed with the weight of sad wisdom—for joy it never seemed to have brought. Curious as his aspect was, in his slow perambulations," continues Hunt, "it was noticeable that never did the rudest boor or the most impudent gutter-boy fail to be chilled into dumb propriety when he passed; they were silenced in their noisy idleness by his outer grotesqueness and inner grandeur. It was noticeable to me that none of the thousand entertaining incidents of childish caprice and character, nor the endless surprises of whim in the grown-up children of men, ever made him pause or turn his head; his eyes were at all times turned inwards. Despite this habit of mental absorption, he could at unexpected disturbance awaken to reality. One day walking on a narrow pavement, passing a lady girded with preposterous hoops, he was well-nigh thrown to the ground; disentangling his foot, he recovered his balance of limb and temper, and, unruffled, turned ceremoniously to the lady, raised his hat and made his bow, revealing neither annoyance nor sarcasm."

Carlyle's first visit to Hunt's studio came about as a result of some information from a visitor, who had just left 5 Cheyne Row, to the effect that Mrs. Carlyle had expressed interest in his work, and that this interest was shared by her husband. Hunt sent them an invitation, and in the spring of 1853 the famous couple arrived at the studio, where they saw *The Hireling Shepherd* and *Strayed Sheep*. Hunt

records that on this occasion Carlyle looked taller and younger than when seen out-of-doors, and that, "despite a shade of rickety joylessness," his face was one of the noblest he had ever seen. The verdict of the great man upon the pictures submitted to his inspection was favourable—more favourable than Hunt had ever hoped. Referring to one of them afterwards he pronounced it to be "a really grand Picture ! The greatest Picture that I have seen painted by any modern man ! " In reporting which eulogium Mrs. Carlyle adds—"And Mr. Carlyle being notorious for never praising except in negations ('not a bad Picture'—'A Picture not wholly without a certain merit,' etc., etc.), the present outburst of *positive* praise evinces an appreciation of your Picture not to be exceeded by 'any modern man.' "

Seeing that the philosopher was thus favourably disposed, Hunt repeated his invitation nearly a year afterwards when his next pictures were ready to be seen. It was his opinion that in spite of the perpetual discord of her home-life, Mrs. Carlyle was one of the proudest wives in the country. "I observed," he writes, "that in real fact she was proud of her husband to the point of vanity. While he talked she placed herself behind him, and whenever something he said deserved special attention, she good-naturedly smiled across to me, nodded, and when at first I thought I must reply to some of his remarks, she held up her finger and shook her head."

Carlyle's pronouncements upon the as yet uncompleted *The Awakened Conscience* were not, it would appear, quite so positive as his verdict upon the landscapes had been ; but nevertheless he spoke approvingly of it, pointing to the reflection of the green foliage in the polished table with the words—"The moonlight is well given." As to *The Light of the World* his judgments were far otherwise. Always

preferring monologue to dialogue he was soon in the thick of a harangue whose tide it was impossible for Hunt to stem. The picture was a mere "papistical fantasy" and useless alike to Hunt and to the world at large—an inanity or a delusion to everyone that might look upon it. It was only "empty make-believe, mere pretended fancy, to do the like of which is the worst of occupations for a man to take to." Here Hunt's gentle voice of explanation intervened, only to be overwhelmed by a fresh outburst on the part of the sage, who now raised his voice to almost a scream, while his better half raised her finger and shook her head from behind his back. "It's a wilful blindness," he screamed; "ye persuade yourself that ye do believe, but it's high time that ye gave up the habit of deluding yourself." Yet again did Hunt endeavour to make his defence, but the torrent of judgment only rolled the faster, and Mrs. Carlyle became the more vehement in her silent appeals. All things come to an end, and so eventually did Carlyle's dissertation; "Take my word for it," he said in conclusion, "and use your cunning hand and eyes for something that ye see about ye, like the fields and trees I saw here a year ago, and, above all, do not confuse your understanding with mysteries."

Sound and honest advice, this, as far as it went, but Carlyle was not the man to be confronted with symbolism even of the highest kind, and one imagines that his feelings towards the painter of *The Light of the World* were at that particular moment very similar to those which Oliver Cromwell experienced when he shouted to the preaching clergyman, "Cease your fooling and come down, sir!" Yet in truth Hunt's design was no narrow offshoot of ecclesiasticism, as he himself explains. The details were "derived from obvious reflectiveness. My types were of natural figures such as language had originally employed to express

transcendental ideas. . . . The closed door was the obstinately shut mind, the weeds the cumber of daily neglect, the accumulated hindrances of sloth; the orchard the garden of delectable fruit for the dainty feast of the soul. The music of the still small voice was the summons to the sluggard to awaken and become a zealous labourer under the Divine Master; the bat flitting about only in darkness was a natural symbol of ignorance; the kingly and priestly dress of Christ, the sign of his reign over the body and the soul, to them who could give their allegiance to Him and acknowledge God's overrule. In making it a night scene, lit mainly by the lantern carried by Christ, I had followed the metaphorical explanation in the Psalms, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,' with also the accordant allusions by St. Paul to the sleeping soul, 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand.' The symbolism was designed to elucidate, not to mystify, truth."

Much has been written about this famous picture but nothing so much to the point as what has been said by Ruskin in his letter to the *Times* of the 5th May, 1854 (reprinted in *Arrows of the Chace*, Vol. I) to which the reader is referred. "For my own part," he writes in the course of this letter, "I think it one of the very noblest works of sacred art ever produced in this or any other age." He then goes on to give as the reason for the failure of many people to understand Hunt's work, the fact that the public had for so many years been "accustomed to see pictures painted without any purpose or intention whatsoever," with the result that "the unexpected existence of meaning in a work of art may very naturally at first appear to us an unkind demand on the spectator's understanding." In comparing the true Pre-Raphaelite work with that of imitators, he refers to the small gems in Christ's robe,

"Not one," he says, "will be made out in form, yet there is not one of all those minute points of green colour but it has two or three distinctly varied shades of green in it, giving it mysterious value and lustre." And in *Modern Painters* he refers to Hunt's critics as "men whose entire capacities of brain, soul and sympathy, applied industriously to the end of their lives, would not enable them, at last, to paint so much as one of the leaves of the nettles at the bottom of Hunt's picture of the Light of the World."¹ The latter he describes in another place as "the most perfect instance of expressional purpose with technical power which the world has yet seen."

Towards the end of 1853 this picture was sold for four hundred guineas to Mr. Combe, to whom Hunt had promised from the beginning to give the first opportunity of purchasing. It now hangs beneath the organ of Keble College Chapel, Oxford.

The Awakened Conscience was commissioned by a friend of Augustus Egg as a result of the interest aroused in him by the original design for the subject. It was suggested to the painter by a verse of the *Proverbs*, "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart," during the time when he was working out the idea for its companion picture. In *The Light of the World* the door of conscience is firmly shut and sealed; in *The Awakened Conscience* "a still small voice speaks to a human soul" and the closed door has been loosened, allowing a ray of light to penetrate into the dark interior. And this is the way in which it happens: A girl has been sitting at a piano with her seducer, singing a song to his accompaniment. The title of the piece can be read; it is "Oft in the still night"; the words have penetrated into her heart,

¹ *Modern Painters*, Vol. III, Ch. VI.

and she has started up dismayed¹ by the sudden realization of her past life, while he continues to strike the keys in ignorance of the change that has taken place in her. The shining newness of the furniture suggests by contrast the complete severance from the old home, the recollection of which the words of the song :

Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me

have brought like a flash into her mind. And behind the chair is a cat from which an injured bird is struggling to escape—a symbol of the struggle that has begun in the girl's mind. These are some of the ways in which the meaning of one of the most powerful tragedies set on canvas in modern times has been expressed. With it ended a chapter in the painter's life, for he was about to enter upon new scenes which were to leave their mark upon his future work.

Hunt tells us that he had about £700 for his Eastern travels. His departure was delayed by the dull wintry weather, which prevented the completion of his picture; about the 16th January, 1854, however, the sun burst forth and the finishing touches were applied. Without a moment's delay he then took leave of his friends, and with Millais made his way to the station. "I had not time to dine," he writes, "and Millais rushed to the buffet and seized any likely food he could, tossing it after me into the moving carriage. What a leave-taking it was with him in my heart when the train started! Did other men have such a sacred friendship as that we had formed?"

¹ Hunt regretted that at the request of the owners he afterwards modified the expression of agony on the girl's face.



THE AWAKENED CONSCIENCE

Facing p. 90

VIII

EGYPT AND PALESTINE

1854

REACHING Paris on the 14th February he spent three nights at an ancient hotel in the rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and would most probably have remained there somewhat longer had not his imagination invested the place with the phantoms of former tragedy. A blood-curdling nightmare hastened his departure from Paris; he travelled by train to Châlons, boarded a steamer on the Saône in icy weather, and, passing a night at the ice-bound Lyons, continued the voyage southwards on the following day. Before noon the boat crossed the boundary-line between the frozen north and the genial south, and he describes himself and his fellow-passengers as suddenly compelled by the access of warmth and sunshine to divest themselves of their wraps and greatcoats. At Avignon he caught a glimpse of the Alps and the "sky behind canopied Italy," and it was not without a pang that he turned his face "away from the land where the highest and strongest artists had laboured, and where so many of their noblest works still remained." Here he joined the railway once more, and after a brief journey reached Marseilles, where he beheld for the first time the glory of the southern light. Then followed a delightful cruise through the Mediterranean "with porpoises racing the vessel and flying-fish shooting through prismatic arcs of the waves even on to the deck. How sweet, too, it was to look over the gunwale into the lapis-lazuli water, dense as in a dyer's vat, marbled all through

with engulfing veins." Those who have seen the Mediterranean in good weather will realize that Hunt's power of depicting natural scenes was not limited to the brush.

At Cairo he joined the painter, Thomas Seddon, who was to be his fellow-traveller for some little time. In a letter to Millais, written in March, he says: "I hope you will come out in the autumn. Seddon will have gone back by then, and I will have made some way into the language, if possible. I am very likely to remain abroad for a year or two, for it is impossible to do any good in merely passing through a country, particularly when one has so many prejudices to overcome as exist here."

It is not long before we find him struggling against every imaginable difficulty in the procuring of models for his intended picture. In the same letter he writes to Millais: "I wish my attempts to get models had been encouraging in the result. Bedouins may be hired in twenties and thirties, merely by paying them a little more than their usually low rate of wages, and these are undoubtedly the finest men in the place; but when one requires the men of the city, or the women, the patience of an omnibus-man going up Piccadilly with jibbing horses on an Exhibition-day is required. I have made the attempt to get a woman to sit, until, at the end of a fortnight or three weeks, I have realized nothing but despair." And later he recounts his experiences when conducted into a house where there seemed some hope of engaging a woman to sit to him: "With only about twenty words of Arabic and a great deal of impatience, I could not afford much ceremony; so, after I had fired off the nineteen, I thought it time to walk up to the most graceful figure, utter the remaining word, 'Yia bint,' and lift up her veil—a proceeding for which they were scarcely prepared. The shy 'daughter of the

full moon 'squinted ; and, on turning to others, I discovered that Nature had blessed each with some such invaluable departure from the monotony of ideal perfection.

" 'The evening star' had lost her front teeth, 'the sister of the sun' had several gashes in her cheek, while 'the mother of the morning' had a face in pyramid shape."¹

Those who are familiar with Eastern ways will pronounce the adventure a decidedly rash one, but fortunately no harm resulted, though Hunt refers to 'a fight with a man or two in going downstairs and an encounter with several dogs in the yard.'

On another occasion he succeeded in prevailing upon a young man to sit to him. For the first sitting all went well, but on the following day the model failed to appear. Meeting Hunt in the street at a later date he showed much indignation, and charged him with attempting to deceive him. It appeared that after he had sat to Hunt he had met a Moalim who revealed the object of the painter, which was, so said the Moalim, "to obtain the portraits of true Moslems in great number, to return with these to England, to call up Satan, and to bargain with him as to the price he would pay for the souls of the victims, and thus become rich beyond conception."

The problem of securing models was forever confronting him during his sojourn in the East. Every moment was of importance to his work, and the innumerable delays and difficulties occasioned by those who sat to him would have driven a less determined artist to despair and the entire abandonment of his intentions ; but Hunt, being a man of no ordinary fibre, was able to get the better of even worse

¹ *The Life of J. E. Millais*, by his son, Vol. I, Ch. VI. I find that a somewhat different version of this letter is printed in Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism*, Vol. I, Ch. XIV.

trials than those occasioned by his models, as will be seen in the course of his further rambles.

After a stay at Cairo he visited the Pyramids and then joined Seddon at the Sphinx, where the two encamped until a hurricane blew their tent inside out and they were "rolled over and over as though in a blanket pudding, while books, clothes, carpets, paper and drawing materials were scattered about the desert, some of them irrecoverably lost in the sand," an experience which drove them to take refuge in an empty tomb. During this sojourn in the desert he succeeded, after a good deal of trouble, in inducing a girl to sit to him, and the resulting picture, finished some years later, was named *The Afterglow*. For the moment he confined himself mainly to water-colours, which he continued on the river-boat during his passage down the Nile to the coast, whence he and Seddon had arranged to take ship for Jaffa. He was already working out the design for his great picture, *The Finding of Christ in the Temple*.

The trip was an enjoyable one, though he admits that he was at times much tried by his companion. From Cairo he had written to Millais (March, 1854) of Seddon: "When he is present serious thought is often shattered with intolerable and exasperating practical jokes, and by his own unbounded risibility at the same."¹ Madox Brown has recorded in his diary with reference to the present time—"Hunt used to be in agonies about his (Seddon's) joking propensities, and lecture him and get mighty sulky if things did not go right;" but the truth was, Seddon's jokes were of a somewhat abnormal kind and not easily appreciated even by those possessed of the keenest sense of humour. The genial Hunt was full of good spirits and loved nothing better than a joke when it *was* a joke, but Seddon's idea of

¹ *Life of J. E. Millais*, by his son, Vol. I, Ch. XI.

fun was of a kind which belonged exclusively to himself. An example of it is given by Hunt as follows: "One morning, half-way on our journey to Damietta, we both dived into the river from the stern of the boat, and swam about in the rear. He was not strong enough to continue swimming in the unbuoyant water any long time, and, having kept close to the boat, at the end of ten minutes he went to the side, and by the aid of a sailor clambered on to the deck. In another ten minutes I saw that the boat was moving at a great rate, and had got far away from me. I called out therefore to my companion to check the sailors from tugging at it. Along the surface of the water rattles of laughter reached me, and when I called out angrily that he must stop at once, I saw him gesticulating with arms and hands to the sailors to go faster. They obeyed as draft-horses would have done, until the *diabeyeh* disappeared round a distant corner of the bank. I could not swim fast enough to overtake the rapid boat; and had therefore to strike out for the shore, and there to climb up twenty feet of bank overgrown with stinging thorns and thistles, and on the top to walk along a rough path with naked feet for half a mile, where the boat had been stopped." At this humorous event Seddon could do nothing but laugh.

On the following day Hunt's powers as a swimmer enabled him to save the life of his droll companion. The latter had swum further than his strength had warranted, and was in difficulties. Hunt heard his name called in a faint voice. "I hurried to the spot," he says; "and found him exhausted and with all his confidence lost. . . . I thrust my hands under his arm-pits, and in a few seconds we reached the shore." This little incident served to cure Seddon of some of the most inconvenient aspects of his jocosity.

Jaffa was reached on the 30th May, and a day or two later they set off on horseback for Jerusalem over an undulating landscape marked by wavelike crests of rock, and so wide-stretching and solitary, says Hunt, as to encourage a mood of despondency as to the possibility of ever coming in sight of the city. Suddenly, however, the tired travellers reached an eminence whence the goal of their desires suddenly burst upon them. The moment had at last arrived when the hope which Hunt had cherished since boyhood was abundantly fulfilled. Jerusalem lay before him, set in the bosom of a great and as yet unspoilt landscape; "foursquare it was and compact in itself, without suburb, except the enclosure round the tomb of David, and half-way down Zion there was a new white building with a wall of its own to guard it. In an angle with a track leading to it from our standing-post was the western gate. Above the walls at this angle towered three or four ancient fortresses, and to the south of these, above the stretch of wall, spread certain handsome fir trees, while a few graceful cypresses pierced the rounded outlines of the group, making, with the minaret standing by, a variegated cluster of history. . . . The domes and minarets rose against a range with swelling outlines forming the Mount of Olives and the Hill of Offence, and where the line of the northern mass sloped down and left a gap between itself and a southern continuation of the sweep, appeared a far distant horizontal range of mountains of amethyst and azure hue, the Mountains of Moab.

"The afternoon sun was already beginning to glow with the softness of amber, the breeze from the sea had awakened the birds, and the windmills turned with a music as of new life. . . . There was an unspeakable spirit of secrecy in the air, while an appropriate beauty that breathed in the scene raised in my mind, without intelligible link, the image of

some beautiful queen mute or dead, but with eyes open and staring to the heavens, as though not even yet to be at peace. The sense of pity made responsiveness a need. I turned to my companion, and he, habitually jocose, was now leaning forward with clenched hands upon the pommel of the saddle, swaying his shoulders to and fro, while copious tears trickled down his cheeks, his satisfied eyes overflowed despite of or unknown to himself."

Entering the city gate on the evening of the 3rd June,¹ the travellers in the then absence of hotels took up their quarters at the Casa Nuova, where they received a kindly welcome from the Superior and brothers and were entertained for a fortnight; at the end of which period a furnished house, with two men-servants, an Abyssinian and a Tripoli Jew, was hired by Hunt, whilst Seddon took up his abode elsewhere.

A day or two after their arrival Hunt's thoughts were rudely broken in upon by newspaper criticisms of his pictures at the Academy; they had just come from England. The *Athenæum* pronounced *The Light of the World* "a most eccentric and mysterious picture," adding later, "Altogether this picture is a failure." In similar strain did it describe *The Awakened Conscience*. And the *Morning Chronicle*, unable to penetrate into the mysteries of the last-named work, endeavoured to make the best of itself by declaring that it was "an absolutely disagreeable picture," and failed "to express its own meaning." And so on throughout the whole press. A painter does not as a rule attach any high value to newspaper critiques of his works, but such adverse criticisms as those which he now received are not calculated to encourage their sale and do not therefore make cheerful reading to the artist whose funds are on

¹ See *Memoirs and Letters of Thomas Seddon*, pp. 90, 91.

the decrease. Hunt was depressed by the ignorant babble of these journalists, but pursued his own way none the less, and was soon in the thick of his preparations for *The Finding of Christ in the Temple*.

Before long the post brought him copies of Ruskin's letter to the *Times* ably and convincingly defending his two pictures from the abuse that had been bestowed upon them; and he was gratified to learn at a later date that, despite the censures of the critics, the *The Light of the World* had been understood by those whose opinion he valued; had indeed made a profound impression all over the country, so that W. B. Scott could truly say of it, "For the first time in this country a picture became a subject of conversation and general interest from one end of the island to the other." Referring many years later to this picture in a letter to Scott (19th August, 1883) Hunt says: "Many times since that day, when the critics assailed it violently, I have been comforted by hearing of persons in sickness who knew not the painter's name, and troubled themselves not at all about the manner of its production, or the artistic question, speaking of the picture as one that had haunted them and given them hope—the hope that makes death have no terrors."

Hunt relates many an odd incident connected with his life in Jerusalem, one of which is to the following effect: He was on his flat roof one evening when the glory of the moonlight induced him to raise himself high enough to see the view over the top of the parapet. He stood gazing at the solemn scene (which included the mosque As Sakreh and some swaying dark cypresses), and was so impressed by its poetic beauty that he began to make a drawing of it. It happened that the neighbouring house was lower down the hill on which he stood, so that quite unconsciously he had raised himself to a position which commanded a bird's-

eye-view of his neighbour's dwelling, with the result that his meditations were rudely interrupted by the indignant tones of a man's voice demanding in Arabic why he was peering into his premises. Hunt replied that he was doing no such thing : upon which the other rejoined, " Why then are you putting your head over the partition wall? "

" I was looking at the mosque," explained the offender.

" That can't be," replied the Moslem. " What you are doing is to look over at my wives, and I insist upon your getting down."

" I regret," said Hunt, now aware how matters stood, " that you should see any cause for complaint; I did not know there were any ladies in your house. I hope, O Effendi, you will be patient, because my drawing will take a little time to finish."

The other now shifted his ground. " You may not want to look at my wives, but if you stand up there they will take the opportunity to look at you, and you should know it's against the law to look over your partition wall; I will not allow it! "

This settled the question, and henceforth Hunt arranged to occupy a position whence he could not be seen.

There were difficulties, also, within doors; for, whilst he was closely engaged upon his work, his servants would seize the opportunity of abandoning their duties, and would while away their time in the bazaar shops, leaving the house and its occupant to take care of themselves. At another time the Rabbis began to harass the unhappy painter by publishing threats of excommunication against all who entered his house; for it had been reported that he " was bent upon making doubles of the faithful Jews," and that, when these " doubles " were baptized, the originals would automatically become Christians. Add to this the annoyances

and interruptions caused by his models whenever he succeeded in procuring any, as well as rough treatment received when he wandered about the city, and it will be seen that at that date he who would paint scenes in Palestine must needs have been a bold and persevering artist.

During his explorations of the neighbourhood he was repeatedly insulted by Arabs of Siloam, who mocked his movements and addressed him as "dog," "pig of a Christian" and "donkey." On one occasion, indeed, he was threatened with blows, and his drawing materials were seized upon, until his patience was tried beyond its limits, and a struggle ensued in which the offending rabble learnt that their man was rather more their match than they had imagined. Suddenly, however, one of them seized a long horse pistol that hung nearby on a tree, and approached him with this formidable weapon, which might then and there have put an end to the days of our painter had not he promptly whipped out his revolver and covered the man's chest with it before he was ready to fire. This prompt and fearless action put an end to the combat, and, on the advice of Seddon, then encamped on the field of Aceldama, the would-be murderer was arrested, together with his sheikh and the son of the latter. Though Hunt showed leniency towards them, the Arabs were taught a lesson, and henceforth treated foreigners with some degree of respect.

It was fortunate that he succeeded in overawing his assailant by the mere *show* of his revolver, for the latter was a cheap one, and, when tried later in his garden, refused to go off, a defect which might have had further serious results; for, in endeavouring to remedy the trouble, he accidentally discharged the weapon, and the bullet passed between his fingers, slightly burning them.

A happy result of this clash with the Arabs was the

beginning of Hunt's close friendship with a young surgeon then resident at Jerusalem, Sim by name, who had heard of the fight and made some enquiries about it from him. Other friends of his then in Jerusalem were W. J. Beamont, engaged in instructing Jewish and Greek converts, and James Graham, formerly director of a Glasgow bank which had failed some years before. Sim was a Scot of sterling qualities—"one," says Hunt, "to be counted on while he was shoulder to shoulder with you, but in his frankness abrupt and sudden, and ready to explode if obstructed." Graham was "a churchman with a strong tendency to Presbyterianism; he was good-nature itself, but prosy, and an incorrigible procrastinator. Tall, fair and brawny, riding beautifully, and having a deliberately polite gait and manner, he took rank at once as a person of distinction." Hunt arranged to join these friends in expeditions to the wilder parts of Palestine. Sim and Graham taking part in the first of these, and Beamont in the second.

The first took place in the hottest season of the year—to the Wadi Kerith, half-way to the Dead Sea and traditionally the place of Elijah's retreat. Hunt was, of course, to draw, Graham to photograph, and Sim to shoot. The start on horseback was made at sunrise; and under the guidance of Sim's servant, who incidentally came into Hunt's service many years later, the *wadi* was reached in the heat of the day and each went about his own particular business. Hunt was absorbed in his drawing when it happened that two Arab youths came and sat themselves down on either side of him, to be joined a little later by a man who, professing friendliness, asked to see Hunt's gun, and told him that he wanted ammunition. As the group had approached inconveniently near to him, Hunt rose to his feet and said in Arabic, "Listen! I am busy. If you like to sit where I point out,

you are welcome ; I will not allow you to come nearer. I have no time to show you my gun ; I will not give you powder nor lead. Be quiet."

The Arab, however, persisted in his demands and said, "Do you know that I belong to —— tribe, and that last year we drove away some Americans, and killed one ?"

"I daresay," replied Hunt, "but we have not come here to be killed. We are English, and you had better be careful. Sit in the place I give you, as I sit in mine."

The drawing was continued, but was again interrupted, for Hunt felt that his belt, which was loose, was being stealthily drawn away from him. He turned instantly, and, perceiving that one end of it was in the Arab's hands, snatched it from his grasp, and rose to his feet confronting his adversary. Those who have experienced Arab treachery will realize that the situation was not a pleasant one, and that the approach of further Arabs, a possibility by no means remote, might have led to serious consequences ; but Hunt cared not for such emergencies, and thought only of the progress of his drawing, which had been so troublesomely interrupted. A total absence of fear is often the best defence on such occasions as the present, and he certainly knew little about fear at any time. Anxious to continue his work he shouted across to Sim, who, exhausted by the heat, had fallen asleep in a cave nearby—"Sim, you lazy dog, you are sleeping and doing nothing, while an impudent scoundrel wants a thrashing."

At that very moment a boy was observed to have gained possession of the sleeper's cravat and top-boots ; he was crawling away with them, but, fearing Hunt's gun, which was held in a threatening position, he instantly dropped them and descended to the stream. Sim in the meantime was wide awake. Putting on the nearly stolen boots he

approached the intruders gun in hand; whereupon the weapon was seized by the Arab, who attempted to wrest it from him. But the Arab's strength was no match for that of the sturdy Scotsman, who immediately swung the gun round so that it was directed full against his opponent. "The click of the hammer," writes Hunt, "on being turned to full cock made me breathless; it had no less effect on the Arab, who designedly dropped down, getting up further off to abuse us in noisy and passionate strains, and shouting to others coming up to aid him."

In the meantime Graham's camera was becoming the chief object of interest, for it was surrounded by five Arabs, who stood in terror of it whilst Graham was slowly carrying out a retreat. Ibrahim, the servant, thereupon began to harangue those nearest him, advising them to be cautious, and averring that his masters were not to be intimidated—that, in fact, nothing could make them abandon their intentions. While this was going on, Hunt continued to draw, until it became apparent that the situation was not likely to improve, and that the camera was so closely beset as to render an instant rescue of it necessary. All that could now be done was to secure the camera and return homewards. The retreat was a singularly careless one, for each moved off when he happened to be ready, regardless of the fact that the neighbourhood was becoming more and more infested with a mob of unscrupulous natives to whom murder was a mere pastime. Hunt was, of course, left far behind packing his drawings, and, with Ibrahim's assistance, saddling and bridling his horse; so that by the time he was ready to lead his horse up the rocky side of the *wadi* he was alone amid a large hostile gathering. Happily, fearlessness kept his enemies at bay, and he succeeded in rejoining his careless friends without either loss or injury.

This first expedition into the wilds of Palestine was useful in convincing him of an important fact, namely, that he was confronted with two alternatives with regard to the objects for which he had come to the East ; either that he must incur the risk of frequent battle during the course of his work, or that he must abandon all attempt to achieve what he had planned ; in other words, that in order to succeed he must be soldier as well as artist. High-spirited and fond of adventure he decided against the abandonment of his projects. Many painters have gone to the East for material, but few, if any, have carried on their profession, as Hunt now proceeded to do, among a hostile and bloodthirsty people, supported only by his native tact and fearlessness and defended by the weapons which he himself carried.

IX

THE DEAD SEA

1854

IN a letter dated the 10th November, 1854, Hunt wrote to Millais: "It may be interesting to you to know that my tent was pitched on the plain of Mamre, under a tree still called 'Abraham's Tree,' where he entertained the three angels. (The tree, however, though an immense and ancient one, has no just claim to the dignity.) Here I laid down in the middle of the day and took out your letters—Halliday's and your own—which I had brought with me, and re-read them again with a delight which made every word like pure water to a thirsty soul."¹ This visit to Hebron and the ancient oak tree took place in the company of Sim, Graham and Seddon, and there is evidence in Hunt's words of longings for his native land with its old familiar faces. He was, indeed, at this time questioning as to whether, in view of the innumerable difficulties that faced him, he should not own that he was defeated, and return to England before his rapidly dwindling store of money came to an end. He had hoped to have his picture of *The Finding of Christ in the Temple* ready for the 1855 Academy Exhibition, but progress had been slow, and it had already become clear that his hopes were to be disappointed. Revolving matters in his mind he recollected that he had on a former occasion determined to suggest to Landseer that he should paint a picture illustrative of the ancient Jewish ceremony of the Scapegoat. But such a picture, so it

¹ *The Life of J. E. Millais*, by his son, Vol. I, Ch. VI.

occurred to him, if it were to be worthily done, required that the painter should have visited Syria. And thus it began to appear that he himself was more in a position to carry out this project than was the other painter. Immediately, therefore, he proceeded to study the subject in Jewish writings, ascertaining the type of landscape that was necessary, the correct time of the year, and all the circumstances attendant upon the rite ; so that by the time the Day of Atonement had come he was fully prepared for his background, which was to be a view of mountains from the shores of the Dead Sea.

While these arrangements were in progress, Seddon was preparing to return to England before the full completion of his picture. Referring to the occasion of his return, Madox Brown writes in his diary (16th January, 1855): "Yesterday Seddon came back, after more than twenty months of absence, looking thinner and genteeler than ever and in high spirits. . . . His pictures are cruelly P.R.B.'d. . . . The high finish is too obtrusive. . . . Could I but have seen them in progress! I will do all I can to make him improve them yet, but it is late. Hunt, he tells me, gave him no advice at all ; he has been prepossessed against him, I fear."

But in actual fact Hunt had given him plenty of sound advice, which, however, Seddon had not been prepared to follow ; and the qualities of his picture, which Brown incorrectly describes as P.R.B.'d, were just those qualities which Hunt had done his best to improve. Before Seddon's departure the latter had examined and criticized his work, pointing out that the tones and the tints of the landscape were not correctly related, and that the innumerable varieties of the scene had been missed, without which the painting was sure to appear crude and false ; as, indeed, it did to

Madox Brown, whose notion at that time appears to have been that Pre-Raphaelitism was a matter of "high finish" rather than of truth to nature.

During this period poor Brown was passing through that extreme poverty which makes his diary so pathetic to read. In spite of his little failings one cannot but admire the courage and patience with which he faced adversity. One or two extracts from his journal at this time will show how he was occupied near London, while the more fortunate Hunt was pursuing his work amid the beauties of Palestine.

"1854. 6th Oct. . . . At half-past three prepared all our plate (six teaspoons), all the jewelry, my watch, opera-glass, and bronzes, to take into London to the pawnbroker's. . . . Funds reduced to three shillings, and two more that Lucy [his daughter] has left behind.

"18th Dec. . . Emma about to be confined—£2 10s. in the house—Christmas-boxes to be *paid out of this*, and the children taken back to Gravesend—and not one person in the world I would ask to lend me a pound. No one that buys my pictures.

"30th Dec. . . . I took my dress-coat, trousers and waistcoat, and necktie, with a silk cape and brooch of Emma's; and, putting them into a bag, walked into Hampstead, and took 'bus to New Road, and discovered the abode of old Williams . . . and told him to pawn them, which he did for 10s."

Early in the following year the pawning still continues and his finances are reduced to 3s. 3d. "God help us," he adds. "I see nothing but ruin by progressive stages." And in July, 1855, his wife temporarily forsook the home, a calamity which, though only momentary, almost reduced him to suicide, for he writes on the 5th—"What would become of my children if I were to finish my wretched

existence, and what is to become of me if I do not? Oh God! Have mercy on me and save me."

The contrast between Hunt's fortunes and those of the older painter is interesting as showing that whatever were Hunt's difficulties (and they were considerable throughout this early period of his life) he was yet preserved from the worst adversities that may assail an artist—adversities which his father had rightly dreaded for him. He was, at the moment now reached by our history, in his twenty-eighth year; and, precarious though his resources undoubtedly were, the breadth of his experience, his indomitable courage, his genius, his rocklike sincerity formed a foundation beneath his feet from which adversity could not easily move him. Not that in another age he might not have shared the fortunes of the most unhappy of artists, but despite the insults of the mob, there did in his day exist a substratum of sincere, intelligent spirits who knew his meaning, sympathized with his aims and recognized his unique power; so that, hindered though he was by the journalists, he was yet saved by the leaven of society from the worst sufferings of an artist's life.

Soon after Seddon's departure we find him once more at Hebron on his way to the Dead Sea, his fellow-travellers during the latter portion of the journey being W. J. Beumont and the latter's father. Hebron is some seventeen miles to the west of the shores of the desolate lake, and the whole region was wild and dangerous. Upon reaching the south-western margin of the Dead Sea the party was resolved to test the buoyancy of the water by bathing—a pleasure which Hunt was glad to curtail when the experiment revealed the nature of the water. He tried to walk through the shallows into swimming depth, but the heavy brine tripped him and threw him on his face. When he

attempted to swim, his feet rose higher than his head, he rolled over and over, driven by a powerful current against the branches of submerged trees; the mosquito-bites and abrasions with which he was covered smarted agonizingly, and he was momentarily blinded by the brine. Yet some good was derived from the experiment, for he tells us that the moment he emerged from the water the smarting ceased, and every bite and abrasion was healed.

There followed, on the next day, an exploration of the line of coast in the region of the Ūsdūm¹ ridge of hills, and later the party moved northwards to Masada and Engedi, at times parched with thirst. "It was a journey of inconceivable delights," says Hunt, in spite of the hardships endured; "its daring nature only added zest to the adventure." A detailed examination of the country traversed resulted in the choice of the Ūsdūm district as the most suitable setting for *The Scapegoat*, and, being guided northwards by Arabs, the party reached the Jordan, continuing their journey thence back to Jerusalem by way of Jericho.

Upon his return Hunt was gratified by the news that a model for the Temple picture had been engaged. The son of a well-to-do Jew was to come to him accompanied by his father. But the sitter had not been twenty minutes in the studio before the father asked whether the work was finished. He insisted that he must leave, but promised to return later; he and his son departed accordingly, but never came back. Another model was engaged, but also disappeared after the first day. So that little progress was made with the picture, and Hunt almost began to regret that he had been encouraged to return from the Dead Sea in the hope of finishing it.

In the meantime he was carefully planning a return to

¹ Pronounced *Oosdoom*.

Ūsdūm in order to put *The Scapegoat* into effect, and in a letter to Millais, dated the 10th November, 1854, a few days before his departure, he refers to these projects: "For the next week or two I shall be stationed about sixty miles from Jerusalem, and with no means of dispatching letters thence or communicating with any human being above a wild Arab. The prospect is sufficiently dreary, to say the least of it, but I am tempted to it for the sake of a serious subject that has come into my head, for the next exhibition of the Academy. . . . In Leviticus xvi, 20, you will read an account of the scapegoat sent away into the wilderness, bearing all the sins of the children of Israel, which, of course, was instituted as a type of Christ. My notion is to represent this accursed animal with the mark of the priest's hands on his head, and a scarlet ribbon which was tied to him, escaped in horror and alarm to the plain of the Dead Sea, and in a death-thirst turning away from the bitterness of this sea of sin."¹

News had reached him that the whole of southern Syria was in disorder as a result of the withdrawal of troops occasioned by the Crimean War, which was then in full progress; and this meant that the second visit to the Dead Sea was likely to be a perilous undertaking; for, once out of control, the roving populations of that desolate region tended to become even more a set of brigands and cut-throats than they were in normal times; the surroundings even of Jerusalem were liable to be infested with bandits. Reports now arrived from native travellers that the roads were wholly impracticable. But, says Hunt, "I had no intention of giving up the Scapegoat subject, cost what it might;" and on the 13th November, having engaged horses and mules, he put them in charge of a man whom he

¹ *The Life of J. E. Millais*, by his son, Vol. I, Ch. VI.

had already used, Nicola Beyrouti, by name, a complete coward when danger threatened, but not without good characteristics under more favourable circumstances. Several weeks before, he had also engaged a white goat to serve as the sole model for his picture. The start was made on the afternoon of the 13th November, and night came on long before half the day's journey was completed.

It is not difficult to picture the little party as it made its way in the uncanny silence of the moonlit night; the mules and horses that carried Hunt's baggage in the worst of condition, his own steed worn out and wholly unfit for such a journey, the muleteers nervous and wishing themselves safely in Jerusalem, Nicola in perpetual terror of his life, the unhappy goat, walking and being carried by turns, piercing the night air with its bleatings at a time when the utmost secrecy was needful, and Hunt, the only calm one of the party, doing his best to prevent the men from abandoning the expedition for fear of the dangers that lay ahead.

An hour had elapsed since reaching the Pools of Solomon, and Hunt was at the head of the party, when yells from Nicola, mingling themselves with the bleatings of the goat, reached his ears. He rode back and found his servant, a well-built man five years older than himself, crying like a baby and ducking his head as though to escape a shower of missiles. Enraged at such cowardice, Hunt asked, "What is the matter with you, O madman?"

The reply came, "There are robbers."

"Where?"

"All about us; do shoot, I pray, Khowagha."

"I am not such a fool; I will ride behind you and protect you," was the consoling reply; and Hunt placed himself in the rearguard of the party.

But no sooner had he done this than he and his horse were struck by stones in several places at once. "I held up my gun against the sky," says he, "cocked the two triggers, brought round my revolver, and shouted, 'Now I am ready for the first man who shows his head.'"

The missiles ceased to come, and Nicola urged, "Now shoot to show you have a gun with two souls, and a pistol with many." But the need to shoot was past, for the foes were sufficiently intimidated and ceased their attacks.

On the following day, when Hebron was reached, Hunt learnt from the Prussian doctor at the Quarantine that in the preceding week there had been fighting in which fifty men had been killed. After a night here the journey was continued by our traveller, who was now in the best of spirits. "I felt a novel joy in life," he writes. "I looked around to account for my exhilaration of spirit, and could only discover a sweet purity in the very barrenness of the scene before me." Upon arriving at the encampment of one of the sheikhs of the locality, Abou Daouk by name, he began negotiations for the use of a few men as guides and caterers during his sojourn by the Dead Sea. The detailed account to be found in his book of his conversations with the sheikh makes admirable reading, and shows incidentally that he had progressed remarkably with his practice and knowledge of colloquial Arabic, though he confesses that he experienced difficulties with the tribal dialect and had to be helped out by his servant. But, above all, it reveals how far, during a comparatively short experience, he had been able to enter into the subtleties of the Eastern character, and how well he understood the men with whom he dealt. The ability to manage native peoples is a gift with which few are endowed, but which Hunt possessed in an eminent degree; and the evidence of tact and courage which his own modest and unassuming

account of these wanderings affords, leads one to the conclusion that had he turned explorer instead of artist he might have shared the reputation of Livingstone, who was at this very time penetrating the wilds of Africa. Nevertheless, the prolonged argumentation with the wary sheikh proved trying to his temper, and by the time he had set off with his own party, to which were now added five Arabs, he was in a state of high irritation.

This was apparent to some at least of the sheikh's men, for, during the early stages of the journey, one of them, a man of about twenty, approached him, kissed his hand and expressed the hope that he bore no anger against him personally. Attracted by his pleasant face and "unblemished guilelessness," Hunt asked his name and was told that it was Soleiman. The latter then made an odd request—could he be Hunt's son?—and, having gained the other's consent to this proposal, he naïvely enquired his name. Hunt supplied the necessary information, but the words *Holman* and *Hunt* alike failed to enlighten him; he pronounced them, in fact, to be no names at all. *William*, however, appealed to him immediately, and he adopted it henceforth in the form of *Wullaum*. Hunt was by this time melted towards his Arab followers and all previous annoyance was speedily forgotten.

In due course the party reached its destination at the Wadi Zuara, the baggage animals were unloaded, and Hunt set off on foot to find a position for his painting on the salt-encrusted shores of the Dead Sea, taking with him Soleiman, the goat, and a donkey to carry his picture-case. A suitable spot just north of the Ūsdūm ridge was eventually found and preliminaries were begun. Once more we try to picture him in his lonely surroundings, at work each day upon his picture—a solitary Englishman with no one with

whom to converse in his native tongue, and placed amid a desolation appalling in its loneliness, in a region which few Europeans had visited, and which few Europeans would think of visiting at a time when the relaxation of governmental authority had given murder and robbery its utmost freedom. Near at hand is the wild ridge of Ūsdūm, in front of him the Dead Sea bordered by an incrustation of saline matter, and across the water the gnarled slopes of the mountains of Moab gorgeous in the light of the setting sun. It is a pestilential region, and the swarms of flies are so dense that the mouth cannot be opened without the entry of some of them ; but these are kept off by the umbrella beneath which he paints. Seated on a stone our painter toils away outlining the scene, arranging the shadows, and, when the opportunity presents itself, decking his mountains with the glory which the departing sun casts upon them. Not far away are Soleiman and the animals—the former terrified by the approach of dusk, imploring Hunt to abandon his work and to return to the camp away from dangers of ghouls and robbers, and reduced to despair at his firm refusal to comply. Away at the camp itself the men impatient and grumbling, determined to persuade their master to give up his project when he shall return at night.

And here is his own description of one such return, when the dews of autumn chilled the air and he felt the need of some warming exercise: " I put no restraint on my impulse, but, making my gun my partner, I waltzed about fifty yards or more onwards. When I halted and regarded Soleiman, he seemed disturbed and like one possessed of a terrible secret. I became concerned ; he stalked forward with arms uplifted, and when close to me he flung them around my neck, saying, ' Until now you were my father, henceforth

let me be your brother. You are indeed inspired, you dance like a dervish : you *are* one. Can you do it again ? ' Yes, my brother, ' I said, and away I went a second and a third time, indeed often on the way back until I felt no more chill."

Soleiman was profoundly impressed, and whilst Hunt sat that night at his dinner he could hear him relating his doings to the others amid yells of delight. While he was sipping coffee in his tent his servant, Nicola, announced that the Arabs desired an interview with him ; they came, and the chief spokesman asked Hunt to do them the favour of coming out and repeating the dance of which Soleiman had given them such a graphic account—a favour which could not be granted.

The effect of these dancing exploits continued to impress the simple mind of Soleiman, and, on the following day, full of excitement, he addressed Hunt as follows : " Ya Wullaum, the sheikh has no son, I am his nephew, and on his death I am to be sheikh. Let Nicola go back to Jerusalem, he is not good, we don't want him, but you stay with us always. The sheikh has a daughter of right age, you shall marry her, and you shall be sheikh before me. You shall lead us in our raids and battles, and when we are at peace and encamped you shall be our dervish and dance to us. We have arranged it ; so let it be." Later he said, after enquiring where Hunt was born, " I know you are an English *bedawee*, and you were born in a tent."

Hunt, in whom the love of adventure was still strong, writes in reflecting upon Soleiman's princely invitation : " All his stately proposals with the secret dreams thereby excited in my wandering brain of overcoming neighbouring tribes, dislodging the Turks from Judea, restoring the Jews to their long-lost Kingdom, and the general settlement of

the Eastern question, would have been tempting even to a peaceful P.R.B.; but there were two terrible marplots in the way of the romance, who would have had to be reckoned with, the one being Louis Napoleon, the other the English Foreign Minister."

On another occasion he regaled the childlike Soleiman with the ancient story of Lot and his wife, which made a deep impression, and proved of value in the events to be related in the next chapter.

X

WORK AND ADVENTURE

1854 TO 1856

TOWARDS the end of the sojourn, when all but the immediate foreground, the goat and the clouds were approaching completion, the nervous Soleiman announced the approach of robbers (three on horseback and four on foot) and implored him to hide himself and his picture until they had passed by. Hunt refused to be disturbed by such a trifling incident, and to his man's despair continued to paint as though danger was the last thing to be expected. Soleiman, at his wits' end, fled precipitately with the donkey to a gap in a neighbouring mountain, and disappeared. The minutes passed, and at length the voices of the approaching party and the sound of the horses' hoofs on the stones became clearly audible. Hunt ceased his painting and eyed the Arabs as, emerging from behind a mountain, they came to a standstill within about a hundred yards of himself. They were armed with long spears, guns, swords and clubs, and stood regarding with curiosity the unusual spectacle of a strangely dressed foreigner seated beneath an umbrella, and handling objects with which they were wholly unacquainted. After pointing at the umbrella, which appeared to be the main object of their curiosity, they all approached, clattering among the loose stones. Hunt in the meantime had taken up his double-barrelled gun, but still continued to lay on the paint with the utmost sang-froid, steadying his hand on the barrel as he worked. "I continued," he tells us, "as steadily as if in my studio at home."

Upon reaching him, the party drew up in a half-circle, and the leader on horseback shouted in a voice of thunder, "Give me some water!" Hunt calmly surveyed him and the others from head to foot, and then proceeded with his work without a word. The request was angrily repeated, and, after a pause, Hunt replied, "I am an Englishman; you are an Arab. Englishmen are not the servants of Arabs; I am employing Arabs for servants. You are thirsty—it is hot—the water is there—I will out of kindness let you have some, but you must help one another; I have something else to do." With which he again applied himself to his picture. They talked for a moment in excited tones, and then the leader again broke silence.

"Are you here alone?" he asked.

"No," was the calm reply. "I have Arabs of the tribe of Abou Daouk waiting upon me."

"Where are they?"

"Well, some are with my tent and animals in the Wadi Zuara, but one comes with me to stay all day."

After the bottle of water had been handed round, the leader said, "We should see him were he here."

Hunt explained that, being afraid, the man had hidden himself.

"Call him," said the other.

"But *I* don't want him," was the rejoinder, to which the Arab replied, "*We* want him."

"Well," said Hunt, "then *you* call him; his name is Soleiman."

There was a brief discussion, and then the plain echoed with the name "Soleiman"—but silence followed. Hunt again referred to his servant's fear, and this time the man was summoned with assurances that he would not be hurt.

"Presently," writes Hunt, "a voice was heard demanding

further assurances of safety, then my 'brother' stood up from behind a rock, and slowly he came down, bringing the donkey with him. He advanced with salutations direct to the men. First, he kissed the leader, and then addressed himself to the others, who returned his salutation and began to talk, both stating their tribe."

At the end of these ceremonies the horsemen dismounted, lit their pipes, and sat down in a circle. Amid the talk that ensued the voice of Soleiman could be heard assuring the Arabs that his master's tent was guarded by a hundred of his tribe, some of whom were continually visiting him while he worked. The Arabs asked what weapons his master possessed, and Soleiman explained that the one which he held in his hand was a gun with two souls, and that he also had a pistol which would shoot many times without reloading. After further questioning Soleiman narrated to the listening Arabs the story of Lot and his wife, and of the destruction of the four cities of the plain. He then revealed that his master was a dervish, and went on to describe his dancing. The company was evidently much impressed by what had been related, for a silence ensued during which all pondered upon the strange narrative. At length a new speaker took upon himself to sum up the situation; he addressed the whole company, and Hunt's detailed report of his and the other speeches bears strong testimony to the familiarity with a difficult tongue which his scarcely nine months' sojourn in the East had afforded. The conclusion of the speaker was that the foreigner was a magician in search of the four lost cities, which were full of silver and gold and other riches; on his large paper he wrote the sky, the mountains, the plain, the sea and the salt, and he had the white goat led over the ground to cast a spell upon it. When the writing was completed he would return to England with

the paper, wipe out with a sponge the coloured inks, and beneath them discover the four cities and gain possession of the treasures. All held their breath during this exposition, and when it came to an end they agreed that it must be so. After questioning Soleiman as to how long his master was going to remain in those parts, they took leave of him to his infinite relief, and continued their journey.

The Arabs no doubt intended to return at a later date, but fortunately the picture was soon sufficiently completed, and Hunt was able to prepare for his return to Jerusalem, where he would paint the goat, the ground upon which it stood and the clouds. In order that he might be able to reconstruct the ground he collected salt from the margin of the sea and arranged to take this back with him. The departure took place soon after sunrise, but in the course of the journey there were delays, difficulties and dangers in plenty. The principal baggage-mule fell at the edge of a sharp declivity; the unfortunate goat became ill, and was carried for a time on the picture-case, but later sank and expired. As the party approached to within a few miles of Hebron, musket-shots could be heard ahead; later a body of more than fifty Arabs bore down upon the travellers, and Hunt's horse was seized by the bridle and himself by the arm. He describes the assailants as livid in the face, blackened with powder, and with eyes bloodshot. The word "Dismount!" was shouted, and he was about to obey, when another voice yelled, "No; stop!" Reseating himself, Hunt, with his party, was then sent forward towards Hebron, his men in the rear screaming the while to such an extent as to make him believe that they were being murdered. Soon it became apparent that the Arabs were on the point of withdrawing. Hunt and his train advanced until they came under fire from large forces that occupied a position

ahead. Finding that bullets were whistling about his ears he gave the order to his terrified men to descend into a sheltered position, but in a moment a party of twenty horsemen could be seen advancing to intercept his progress. The man, Nicola, was now overcome with fear; he groaned out in his agony that the leader of the advancing party was Abderrachman—one who had a particular hatred for the English, and who would show no mercy. "Pray," besought the unhappy servant, "say you are an American or a German, and he may let us go." Hunt's refusal reduced the poor fellow to despair, and in the meantime the Arabs had advanced and halted near them. Riding up to the leader, Hunt addressed him in words which give us a glimpse of the guilelessness of his character: "I am an Englishman going back to Jerusalem. I have been for a fortnight at the Wadi Zuara. The English Consul knows where I am, and if you stop me he will hold you responsible."

To his surprise a smile passed over the countenance of the leader as he replied, "You are among friends now."

In the course of the explanations that followed it was revealed that Hunt's company had been mistaken for an attacking party, and had in consequence been fired on. The leader was not the dreaded Abderrachman, but his brother. Hunt had been passing through Abderrachman's forces when he was first surrounded; they were trying to capture Hebron, and the man in whose hands he now found himself was engaged in the defence of the town against his brother. Thus had Hunt and his little party of followers passed successively through two opposing forces in the midst of hostilities, and suffered no more harm than if the surroundings of Hebron had been the most peaceful spot on earth. But his adventures were not yet over.

Having taken leave of the brother of Abderrachman he

pursued his way towards Hebron ; but, before entering, he visited his former acquaintance, the Prussian doctor in charge of the Quarantine, then as a result of the fighting cut off from the outer world. In the midst of his conversation with the doctor, cantankerous and irritable in view of the progress of the Crimean War, two porters broke into the room and announced as they gasped for breath that Abderrachman's forces were bearing down upon the town and would arrive in a moment. "Et vous, Monsieur l'Anglais," said the doctor, "que voulez-vous?"

"What are *you* about to do?" asked Hunt.

"Pour moi," was the determined reply, "personne n'entrera ici sans passer au dessus mon corps."

"Then as I am your guest at the moment, they shall have two dead bodies to pass over, but please lend me an extracting ramrod and I will charge one of my barrels, which now has only duckshot."

The two were soon at their posts with weapons ready, whilst the terrified Nicola's sobbing and stamping were heard inside. The forces swept on to the town, were nobly opposed by a few of the inhabitants with flashing swords and guns, and entered without difficulty. To his surprise the doctor recognized the leader of the apparently hostile force as an intimate friend of his, and from this friend the explanation was soon forthcoming that he and another had resolved to abandon Abderrachman and to join the side defending Hebron, so that what had appeared to be a formidable attacking force was nothing more than the approach of deserters from the opposing side.

On the following day Hunt continued his journey, accompanied by two Osmanli *effendis*, who, alarmed at the perils of the way, had sought his protection with their unarmed servants. But before they had gone far they were

confronted by a small band of Arabs, some on foot and some mounted. Upon seeing Hunt and his party the band increased its frontage and the leader turned and faced Hunt, who advanced to meet him on the same narrow track that he was following, until the heads of the two horses met. Holding his gun in one hand, Hunt gently touched the nose of the other horse with a switch that he held in the other, and with an expression of cheerfulness said to the rider, "Marhabba, welcome." Whereupon the latter moved out of his way and let him pass on the track.

"Ah, ah, a friend!" said the Arab with a forced laugh.

"Yes," was the reply, "an English friend."

The Arab was giving orders for the mules to be seized, but Hunt stopped and made ready his gun. Before the leader's orders could be carried out he raised the weapon and announced that he would shoot the moment the halters of the mules were touched. This had the desired effect, for the animals were allowed to move onward with their drivers, and Hunt, taking up a position in the rear, near the hostile party, gave the leader the most courteous salute as he pursued his way.

Jerusalem was reached without further adventure, and from the roof of Sim's house, whence the mountain-ranges of Moab were visible, he was later able to complete the clouds of his picture. Then came the search for a white goat to take the place of the one that had died in the wilderness. After much difficulty a suitable animal was found, but died on the following day, being unable to recover from a long journey. Further efforts were made, and, in the middle of February, 1855, a white kid was purchased, served its turn as a model, and, when no longer required, was presented to the children of a missionary with whom Hunt was acquainted.

In the meantime Hunt's fame was spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land, and he was beginning to be subjected to all the annoyances caused by sightseers; for the city "guides" had located him, and visitors were conducted to his studio as to one of the regular things to be seen; in fact, as he humorously says, all the tourists were "doing" him among the other notable objects of the city.

In his spare moments he would beguile himself, in a way that reminds one of Leonardo da Vinci, by making drawings of imaginary weapons. He drew a gun with forty-two barrels and other extraordinary adjuncts, and added to it a description of each part with lettering, so as to cause it to resemble an engraving. The Crimean War was still progressing, and one evening he arranged with Sim, during a walk, to carry on a discussion concerning this drawing within hearing of a certain American pro-Russian, himself arguing that it was impossible that the Russians should believe in such an invention, that in fact they would never bring such a weapon into the field against the Allies, and Sim affecting to take the other side. The American's curiosity was soon aroused, and he asked for particulars of the matter under dispute. Hunt pronounced the whole thing to be absurd, but when the American saw the drawing he took upon himself to affirm without the least doubt that such a gun had actually been invented in America ten years previously and had been sold to the Russians. He then begged to be allowed to show the drawing to some German friends. The sheet was lent to him, and by its means the rumour got abroad that the allied armies and navies were about to be destroyed by the terrible weapon then in the hands of the Russians. The drawing of a second invention of a still more extravagant nature was next circulated, and by its absurdity put an end to current gossip.

It had been Hunt's intention to send *The Scapegoat* to the 1855 Academy Exhibition, but May passed and the final details were not completed. England was now calling him in tones that could not be gainsaid, and his friend, Millais, then on the point of being married, wrote to urge him to return. "I feel the want of you more than ever," he wrote on the 22nd May, "and art wants you at home; it is impossible to fight single-handed, and the R.A. is too great a consideration to lose sight of, with all its position, with the public wealth and ability to help good art." History shows that more bitterness has been aroused by a few good works of art than by the whole mass of inferior products. Whilst lesser paintings were well hung at the 1855 Exhibition, Millais' *The Fireman* was treated with the usual disdain; and so enraged was he at this piece of injustice, that he shook his fist in the faces of the hangers. Being absent from England for so many months, and failing to exhibit, Hunt had exposed poor Millais to the full brunt of hostile attacks, and the clique at the Academy, whom prejudice and jealousy had made the bitterest enemies of reform, had in consequence been able to exert their baneful influence with undiminished success.

It was not, however, until the summer had passed that Hunt felt able to return. *The Scapegoat* was finished on the 15th June, packed and sent off to England; the small but exquisite picture, *The Lantern Maker's Courtship*, begun in Egypt, was then completed; and this was followed by attempts to advance *The Finding of Christ in the Temple*, attempts which met with the usual difficulties over models. Autumn arrived, and the unhealthiness of the locality, coupled with the long strain of work, brought on a decline in health, followed by an attack of tertiary fever. On the 17th October, soon after he had recovered, he set out on his

homeward journey, having planned to ride on horseback northwards to Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, and over the Lebanon range to Beyrout, where he would embark for Marseilles, via Constantinople, the distance to be travelled in Palestine being about 160 miles.

His friend Graham arranged to ride with him as far as Nazareth, and a certain Mr. Poole, a geologist, joined them for the early stages of the journey. Pausing at Bireh, the party made its way to Nazareth by way of the villages of Nablus, Samaria and Jenin; by which time Poole had left him, Graham fallen ill, and news had arrived from the north that at Tiberias there had been an outbreak of cholera of so devastating a nature that all the inhabitants that were able had fled away. On the 27th October, 1855, Hunt and Graham boldly set out for Tiberias. Hunt's brief description of his first view of the Sea of Galilee is so vivid that it might have come from his brush rather than his pen: "Below the furthest horizon, amid amethystine variation of gradating tints like those of a prism spectrum, lay a mirror, oval and unbroken in border, which reflected the turquoise sky so perfectly that it looked like a portion of the heavens seen through the earth. It was the Sea of Galilee, the next haven of which I was in search."

His delight in colour is evident throughout the account of his travels, as well as in his pictures. He revelled in the blue of the sky, the glow of the sunlight, the tinting of the landscape; and if there are any who think that his pictures are too highly coloured they have but to look carefully at nature at its brightest to realize that every touch of brilliancy that he gives is true to what he saw.

Arrived at the plague-stricken Tiberias he was fortunate in seeing the full moon rise from across the Sea of Galilee; the scene remained with him throughout life and is des-

cribed by him as follows : " I bless my soul now, that I beheld that lovely scene. I shut my eyelids, and can see the creeping waters with the ladder of molten fire. I can count again its miles by the mark of currents and wisps of wind that fretted its surface. The waters labour, they travail, from the gloom they crawl and creep into the ray of glory, and then pass again into obscure repose."

Soon after leaving Tiberias, where feverish symptoms convinced Hunt that had he remained an hour longer he would have been plague-stricken, Graham, who had been the sharer of so many of his travels, and to whom he had become very strongly attached, left him and made his way to Khaifa, whilst Hunt continued northwards with the other's servant, Issa. At Baniyas, near the ruins of Cæsarea-Philippi, he encamped towards the end of November. It happened here that during the night he was aroused by a shuffling noise just outside his tent, and, upon peering out, saw the dusky form of a large hyena bent over a sleeping man and on the point of beginning to devour him; he dashed from his tent and drove the hungry beast away before any injury could be done to the sleeper. The next portion of the journey was along the Jordan to the village of Hasbeiya, whence he proceeded to Damascus in the face of a cold wind; and, having paused here, he continued north-westwards to the plain of Baalbec and on to Baalbec itself, where he viewed with interest and delight the "honey-toned" ruins, ever and anon gazing upon the "coronets of immaculate white" of the crested Lebanon, which it was his purpose to cross.

From Baalbec, where he made some sketches of the ruins, he proceeded to Dahr al Akmar, where he passed the night at a so-called "clean inn," a term which signified a series of stone walls, a dirty yard, one corner of which was rudely

thatched, a large underground chamber inhabited by fowls, asses, mules, a horse, a small flock of sheep and a family of some twelve or more people old and young—all enjoying together the welcome warmth of a glowing fire.

Hunt was chilled to the bone and still suffering from the effects of the fever. Seeing the chamber with its fire he asked the landlord whether he might have a similar room to himself, and whether his men and animals could be allowed a shelter indoors. "Perfectly," replied the man. Presently an uproar began, similar, says Hunt, to that heard in market-towns when the market is in full swing; and behold the whole flock of inhabitants, of whose existence together Hunt had been quite unaware, issued from the chamber.

"Stop!" shouted he in amazement. "I saw only men and women in the firelight."

"Yes," was the obliging reply of mine host, "we are all coming out." And thereupon stepped forth the whole family, cheerfully abandoning their warm hearth to the newcomer.

This was disconcerting to the unselfish painter, who instantly commanded them to return to their room. The landlord remonstrated, and yielded only after much persuasion to Hunt's request that the shelter with the thatched roof should be cleared and placed at his disposal. By the aid of his tent, which he used to cover the unwallled side of the shelter, he made himself a tolerably comfortable lodging-place and then prepared to take a bath, for which two buckets of cold water were provided. During the process of drying there broke upon his ear from the outer world "a boisterous altercation" between Issa, the servant, and "certain rollicking strange voices." Whereupon our traveller ceased his towelling and stamping and called out to

Issa to explain the meaning of the quarrel. Here is the man's reply :

" Why, these people are so unreasonable, Ya effendi ; hearing that you were having a bath all the men, women and children came out to look through a hole in the tent. But they can't all see at once, and I want those who were here at the beginning to go away, and make place for others, but they won't ; and those behind are laughing and quarrelling with those in the front, and I threaten that I will turn them all away if they can't agree."

On the following day the snowy Lebanon was crossed through a canopy of cloud, and the famous Cedars were reached, beneath the shadows of which lunch was partaken of. Hunt had long cherished the desire to see these ancient trees, and the object of the journey had been, to use his own words, " to gain a larger idea of the principles of design in creation which should affect all art." Having lunched and examined the locality he made his way back over the cloud-capped range to the " clean inn " of the preceding night, where he once more took refuge in his shelter. His wanderings were now approaching their end. The latter portion of the journey lay southwards to the village of Zahleh, and round by a circuitous route, within view of the snow-capped Hermon, to Beyrout, where he parted with Issa, the tent and the animals, and embarked for the Crimea on a vessel crammed with Mohammedans. There was cholera on board, and there were innumerable dangers and adventures, including an attempted mutiny, which nearly resulted in disaster to all hands.

Constantinople delighted the traveller, but in the Crimea the spectacle of so-called Christian nations engaged in murdering one another humiliated and saddened him. In January, 1856, just before the armistice was signed, he left

the seat of war ; and, after another eventful voyage in the Mediterranean, reached Marseilles in safety, and travelled thence to Paris and London, where he took a house in Pimlico (an arrangement which lasted some months, after which he moved to Campden Hill), sharing it with his friend Mike Halliday, who had accompanied him home from Constantinople, and arranging for his former pupil R. B. Martineau to have a studio under the same roof.

So ended the most adventurous and one of the happiest periods of his life ; and in glancing back at his recently improved fortunes one recalls likewise his early days of confinement and struggle ; and one cannot help contrasting them with the unexpected joys and excitements which his first visit to the East had brought with it. There was a time when such an event as this appeared to his child's mind as part of a glorious dream never to be realized ; he would turn from visions of foreign lands to the four dreary walls that surrounded him in his office—walls whose bricks he had so often counted ; and upon those walls seemed to be written large that he was “ born only to know through others of the beautiful mountains, the sea calm and wild by turns, of adventures by flood and field.”¹ But now at length the dream had come true, and his life was enriched a thousand-fold more than his most sanguine expectations could ever have foreshadowed. He had not yet reached his twenty-ninth birthday, and yet he had looked upon scenes and undergone experiences which would have amply sufficed for a long lifetime.

¹ *Contemporary Review*, Vol. XLIX, p. 739.

XI

CRIPPLED THROUGH LACK OF MEANS

1856 to 1858

ARRIVED in England he soon found himself plunged into the midst of the legal difficulties of his father—difficulties resulting from the financial troubles of earlier years, and which his father's failing health did not permit him to deal with single-handed. Another responsibility that now devolved upon him was the training of one of his sisters, who had determined to adopt art as a profession and now required his continual attention. One gathers from his account of the Brotherhood that the latter had ceased to exist even in its outward aspect. Rossetti was still prevented by the critics from exhibiting publicly, his brother, William, had ceased altogether to practise drawing, and Woolner had returned from Australia without having gained much advantage from his absence. Millais alone had been struggling bravely against the difficulties that still beset the reform movement.

Outside the body there were several painters who, under the influence of Pre-Raphaelitism, had produced and were producing good work. Brown, of course, was the chief of these, and his *The Last of England* and *Work*, with their sweetness of natural colour, show how wholeheartedly he had thrown himself into the spirit of the reform. Both his paintings and his diary bear clear evidence of the fact that for his backgrounds he made direct use of nature, and did not depend, as was the usual practice, upon either imagination or memory. When it is realized how many difficulties

are apt to beset the painter who ventures to work out-of-doors upon his final canvas, it will be understood how much in earnest Brown was when he followed the example originally set by Hunt in his *Rienzi*. Then, among others, there were the painters Henry Wallis, with his *Death of Chatterton*, and Arthur Hughes, Hunt's intimate friend, with his *April Love*, both of whom had adopted the principles of Pre-Raphaelitism, though neither was strong enough to forward the cause to any appreciable extent.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and the fact that, despite the breaking up of the Brotherhood, its intentions were becoming more and more widely appreciated by other painters was no doubt encouraging to Hunt at this time. And not only was Pre-Raphaelitism gaining admiration from the profession; public approval was also on the increase. It is interesting to note that it was in the north of England that the movement was most clearly understood and most warmly admired; the number of Pre-Raphaelite works that found their way to Liverpool and Manchester and their surroundings is greatly to the credit of the people of Lancashire, whose native shrewdness enabled them quickly to recognize good art even when it differed in principle from that which they had been accustomed to look upon. The north of England had already done welcome service to the reform, and Liverpool had for some years been assisting it, and was still assisting it, by an annual prize of £50 to those working on Pre-Raphaelite principles. Writing in 1858 about Pre-Raphaelitism at Liverpool Ruskin says, "I believe the Liverpool Academy has, in its decisions of late years, given almost the first instance on record of the entirely just and beneficial working of the academical system."

Hunt's first work upon his resettlement in London was

to attempt to complete *The Finding of Christ in the Temple* by the aid of Jewish models. But he soon found himself running short of money, and was obliged to postpone this work, hoping that his need would soon be supplied by a few replicas of earlier paintings done from the original studies, one of these replicas being *The Eve of St. Agnes*, which he sold to a gentleman of Liverpool.

The resumption of his friendship with Rossetti was not a happy one. The latter was captious, full of suspicions, and liable to outbreaks of querulousness. He had long cast aside any sense of obligation to Hunt, and by the aid of Ruskin, who, though an admirable judge of art, was but a poor interpreter of character, was doing comparatively well for himself in the way of patronage. It was at this time that he joined with Hunt, Millais and others in illustrating Moxon's edition of Tennyson's poems, and Hunt declares that Rossetti's dilatoriness proved fatal to the poor publisher, who died soon afterwards.

We now enter upon a brief period of disappointment for the painter—a time when it almost appeared that Egg's prophecy that, upon his return from Palestine, Hunt would be obliged to re-establish his position among artists was to be fulfilled. Many failed to understand the meaning of *The Scapegoat* simply because they knew nothing of the account of the ceremony which the Bible and the Talmud contain. The picture was well hung on the line in the 1856 Academy Exhibition; Lord Palmerston at the dinner made it the principal subject of his speech, the *Times* printed an independent leader about it, it was discussed in all the London parties, but it was abused and misunderstood by many of the newspapers, and, despite the interest which it aroused, it failed to stir up sufficient enthusiasm to induce anyone to purchase it at the price asked, namely 450 guineas,

until at the very close of the exhibition Mr. Windus agreed to the sum.

The Scapegoat is of course emblematic. The key to its meaning, as well as the account of the ancient ceremonies connected with the sending of the goat into the wilderness, is to be found in the 16th chapter of Leviticus. In verses 21 and 22 we read: "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel . . . putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." The higher thought which Hunt had in his mind, and of which the goat was a mere symbol, is to be found in Isaiah's words, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows . . . the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." A magnificent thought and one worthy of treatment by the greatest artist. But separate the picture from its inner significance, regard it without use of the intellect, and we have it just as it appeared to the eyes of many of the critics—a landscape and a lonely goat.

The best criticism of the picture is that given by Ruskin in his *Academy Notes* for 1856. He points out the technical errors, and accounts for them by the fact that the painter was so carried away by intense feeling for his subject as to have overlooked the more practical considerations; though at the same time he admits that the work was carried out under exceptional difficulties. He criticizes the mountains as faultily represented, the hair, hoofs and fillet of the goat as showing "a nearly total want of all that effective manipulation which Mr. Hunt displayed in his earlier pictures," and the composition, with the animal placed right in the

centre of the canvas, as altogether unfortunate; he also points out the fact that the reflection in the water is brighter than the sky reflected. But he does not fail to see the merits of the work, and in comparing it with the "Cattle pieces" or "Lake scenes" of the older painters he says, "I think we shall see cause to hold this picture as one more truly honourable to us, and more deep and sure in its promise of future greatness in our schools of painting, than all the works of 'high art' that since the foundation of the Academy have ever taxed the wonder, or weariness, of the English public." And in another place he draws attention to the fact that "though heavily painted, yet being done every whit from Nature, the picture lights the room, far away, just as Turner's used to do."

In considering its errors, both of manipulation and composition, one must not lose sight of the fact that no painting has ever been done under greater difficulties than those which beset Hunt beside the Dead Sea; and the marvel is that, under such extraordinary circumstances and within such limitations, he had been able to produce a picture which is undoubtedly impressive, and which continues to exert its sway over the mind when other more fortunate works have been forgotten. The dying goat, with its blood-red fillet, stands upon the salt-encrusted shore in the immediate foreground, and, in the shallows adjoining, the pale green and yellow sky above the mountains, the mountains themselves, and the rising moon, are vividly reflected; skeletons are visible in those shallows, and, further back, the deeper water stretches gloomy in its sombre green. Out of the dark depths of it rises the mountain ridge, blue and violet along its base, but growing brighter as it rises high enough to catch the warm rays of the setting sun, and ending in crests of deep red, which burn along the

length of the picture like coals of fire; and lastly come the pallid splendour of the evening sky with its pearl-like moon, and the dusky clouds thickening high above the mountain summits.

It may be as well to add a word as to the smaller version of this subject which now hangs in the Manchester gallery. Upon Hunt's first visit to Üsdüm a fine rainbow hung above the scene he chose, and before his final visit he experimented with this on a small canvas, and eventually completed the picture in England, using a brown instead of a white goat, and making various other changes.

Shortly before the large *Scapegoat* was sold, Hunt was engaged upon his small replica of *The Light of the World*, confident that, on account of the popularity of the original, it would bring him in the ready money which he so sorely needed. It was whilst engaged upon this work (sold later for 300 guineas) at the house of the Combes at Oxford that he again met Thackeray, who called during the time of his pre-occupation with politics. Hunt in his book reports some of the conversation that took place between himself and the novelist.

"What are you doing here?" asked the latter.

"I am working at the first study of an original picture of mine."

"Where is it?"

Hunt led the way to his picture, before which Thackeray paused for a moment in a silence that was somewhat embarrassing to the painter, and then said "Ah me! I assume that we must regard this painting to be your *magnum opus*."

The remark was an unhappy one, and Hunt says that he "winced under the suspicion that he [Thackeray] regarded the work as prompted by narrow sectarianism or insincerity."

He was ashamed that one who had taught him so much should attribute either feeling to him.

Not long after this glimpse of Thackeray he was fortunate in meeting Tennyson at the house of a friend. He describes the poet as "markedly unostentatious and modest in his mien," of swarthy complexion, and "of great girth of shoulder." Hunt had sent him some Latakia tobacco purchased at Baalbec, and Tennyson began the conversation by thanking him for this, and then went on to express interest in his illustrations to the poems; apropos of which he addressed a question to him: "I must now ask," he said, "why did you make the Lady of Shalott, in the illustration, with her hair wildly tossed about as if by a tornado?" The other explained his intention, to which the poet replied unconvinced:

"But I didn't say that her hair was blown about like that. Then there is another question I want to ask you. Why did you make the web wind round and round her like the threads of a cocoon?"

Hunt explained that whereas a poet has at his disposal many pages in which to express his conception, a painter has but a single canvas; and on that single canvas he has to depict not merely an isolated incident but as many as possible of the emotions and circumstances connected with that incident. Thus the disordered hair and the tangled web were intended to convey an impression of the storm which broke upon the Lady of Shalott when she dared to look down to Camelot, and which drew her whole life into the whirlwind of destruction.

Tennyson replied, "But I did not say it floated round and round her"; affirming later that "an illustrator ought never to add anything to what he finds in the text."

Next came a visit to Robert and Mrs. Browning, who were

in London during the summer and autumn of 1856. The former did not quite come up to the expectations raised in Hunt's mind by the nobility of his poems. He describes him as "about five feet six in height, robust and hearty in his tone of interest in all questions discussed." Mrs. Browning he speaks of as small, fragile and betraying a certain "nervous anxiety in her eager manner." A poem by the precocious but sadly spoilt child, Penini, then in his eighth year, was produced, and Hunt was astonished at its precocity.

Somewhat earlier than this he had been introduced to G. F. Watts, and had received a cordial invitation to his studio at Little Holland House. "It was a delight," Hunt writes, "to see a painter of the day with such dream-like opportunities and powers of exercising his genius. It was more than a happy combination, for one may safely assert that nowhere else in England would it have been possible to enter a house with such a singular variety of beautiful persons inhabiting it."

In spite of his increasing fame and the welcome given him by the leading men of his day, the summer of 1856 was marked as a sad one on account of the death of his father, who, borne down by prolonged legal difficulties, now succumbed to inflammation of the lungs whilst seeking refreshment in a holiday at Folkestone. Hunt was summoned to the bedside of the dying man, and had the consolation of learning that his father was completely satisfied that his adoption of the profession of a painter had justified itself. "I had hoped to see you with a substantial fortune before you in the city," said the old man, "but you have proved your passion for art to be so strong that you work even against unforeseen difficulties; this shows it is your natural occupation." He then went on to say that his other

hope had been to see his son among the few painters whose profession had brought wealth; but he realized that he spent so much thought, time and money upon his pictures that what was a good price for those of other painters was but inadequate payment for him. Consoling him with assurances that he was certain of his course and ready to continue patiently and fearlessly, Hunt remained with him until he passed quietly away. Not long after this event came news from Egypt of the death of Thomas Seddon who had returned to the East for further painting there.

In 1857, whilst Hunt, unable to continue his Temple picture through lack of funds, was still struggling to earn a livelihood by replicas of earlier works, Rossetti, under the patronage of Ruskin, was engaged in carrying out those ill-fated pictures of his on the walls of the Union Club at Oxford.¹ His presence there had made quite a sensation, and he had gained as admirers and followers several younger men of genius, including Burne Jones and William Morris, the former of whom was introduced to Hunt after Rossetti's return to London. A good deal of his present fame was produced by his poetry, which had aroused unbounded admiration; but much of his reputation as an artist owed its origin to Ruskin, who bestowed abundant praise upon his work, and in general rendered him the most valuable assistance. Not only did Ruskin's support increase his fame; it did more than that; it placed him on a pinnacle above both Hunt and Millais, and strengthened the report, then becoming current, that he was the leader of the Pre-Raphaelites—a report which Rossetti at this time² welcomed

¹ Madox Brown used to speak of the enormous sums of money spent on the colours for these paintings (now wholly disappeared), and he told a story of Rossetti, who, one day from the top of a ladder, upset a pot full of priceless *lapis lazuli*, ground into real ultramarine, and merely remarked, "Oh, that's nothing; we often do that."

² He changed his attitude later.

and did his best to spread abroad. On one occasion, whilst walking with Woolner, he so astonished the latter by his evident claim to leadership that Woolner felt obliged to contradict him. "I wasn't going to humour his seriously making such a preposterous claim," said Woolner to Hunt, "so I told him that it was against all the known facts of the case. At which he became moody and displeased, and so went home alone."

Neither Hunt nor Millais thought anything of such reports as these. They were too generous to grudge Rossetti his good fortune, and did not take the trouble to contradict the fables about the Brotherhood then being circulated, with the result that it was not until many years later, when the *Life of Millais* by the painter's son appeared, that the truth began to be known. It is regrettable to find that such a lover of truth as Ruskin, who has done more in the cause of art than any other writer, and can be depended upon in an exceptionable way for justice and exactitude, should not have enquired sufficiently into the origins of Pre-Raphaelitism to have enabled himself to ascertain how the movement really began, and how much of his early training Rossetti owed to Hunt.

During the course of the summer of 1856 Hunt had, on the advice of his friend Combe, enrolled himself for election as an associate of the Royal Academy. The prejudice of this body against particular painters was notorious at the time, and is illustrated by an incident connected with Watts, which took place a couple of years later. Like Hunt this painter was out of favour with certain of the Academicians, who invariably either skied his pictures or hung them in equally unfavourable positions. Watts was determined that justice should be done to his works, so he shrewdly arranged to hide his identity and to send to the Exhibition

three portraits, not in his characteristic manner, under the pseudonym of F. W. George.¹ When the Exhibition opened they were admirably placed and warmly praised. Needless to say Hunt's application for the Associateship was not regarded with favour, and we have the not unprecedented phenomenon of the rejection from the Academy of one of the most gifted painters of the day.

In the success of later life, when it was felt that Hunt's membership would do honour to the Academy, he was pressed by the President to join, the prospect even of future Presidentship being held out to him; but so opposed to their opinions was his vision of what true art should be that he felt sure he would never be able to work in harmony with them, and that if he joined them he would merely prove himself a traitor to the many struggling, underpaid, sincere artists who were battling against the very prejudices which had stood in his way. When he stood most in need of their assistance, so he said, they had always done their best to ruin him, but now that no assistance was required why should he make himself one of them? The time had gone when the Academy might have done him a service. As a body he still regarded it as a hindrance to the progress of art, and he did not believe that in his old age he would be able to effect any of the necessary reforms by becoming a member.

Whereas Watts was more or less independent of such little annoyances as were meted out through the injustice of the Academicians, and could even afford to secure important public work by offering it free of charge provided that the cost of the materials was defrayed, Hunt was in a very

¹ See *The Life of G. F. Watts*, by M. E. Watts, Vol. I, Ch. VI. But Mrs. Watts does not enter into the real motive behind Watts's use of another name. The portraits were *Miss Mabel Eden*, *Miss Senior* and *Mrs. Nassau Senior* (exhibited in 1858). Hunt refers to only two of them.

different position ; once more faced by dire poverty, he found himself not only struggling to pay his quarterly bills, but absolutely crippled through lack of the means of continuing his great work, *The Finding of Christ in the Temple*, and obliged still to support himself by replicas of his earlier pictures and by the humble task of producing illustrations for periodicals and books at a low rate of payment. Had he been elected an associate of the Academy he would have been sought after by wealthy collectors, the demand for his works would have risen phenomenally, and popular prejudice would have given way to hearty approval. But now that he had failed to be elected, his enemies, who had already profited by his two years' absence from England, were more insolent than ever ; so that, to use Hunt's own words, his position was now "like that of a huntsman pursued by wolves, having to throw away his belongings one by one to enable him to keep ahead of destruction."

Though more fortunate than Hunt, Millais had for years been struggling against popular and journalistic prejudice. Instead of taking a pride in one of her greatest painters, the country had, as in the case of Hunt himself, been steadily opposing his best efforts, until at last he abandoned the fray and determined upon the line of least resistance, namely, that he would allow the quality and nature of his work to be dictated by the public. Every painter has a right to live, and it is therefore hardly just to condemn Millais for striving to support his wife and family. Hunt, out of sympathy for his greatest friend, goes so far as to say that it is only those people whose minds are shallow who blame Millais for his failure to follow up his higher aspirations. But that, surely, is scarcely true ; for have we not the example of Hunt himself, who never swerved one iota from the highest aims of his youth, and yet was able, despite his early poverty

and the slowness of his work in comparison with that of Millais, to make ample provision for himself and his family?

Millais explains the abandonment of his ideals in the following words: "I have striven hard in the hope that in time people would understand me and estimate my best productions at their true worth, but they (the public and private patrons) go like a flock of sheep after any silly bell-wether who clinks before them. I have, up to now, generally painted in the hope of converting them to something better; but I see they won't be taught, and as I *must* live, they shall have what they want, instead of what I know would be best for them." It is the assertion that a painter must *live* which raises questions. Could Millais and his wife and family have lived had he pursued his youthful ideals and continued to put forth his whole strength in the production of large and important works? Undoubtedly they could; for Hunt and others have done so under circumstances that were far more difficult than Millais'. But (and here we arrive at the true meaning of Millais' words) could he have enjoyed his shooting and fishing in Scotland, and could he have maintained the same standard of comfort in his home-life had he not made a bid for popularity by supplying the popular demand? By no means, since it is well known that commerce generally secures better payment than art does. Here then, we have the matter in a nut-shell, and Millais' own words to be printed later will decide the question once and for all. But what Hunt says in defence of his friend's surrender to public demand has its true side. No painter can produce his best work unless supported by his country, and it is evident from the account already given of Hunt's struggles to maintain the high standard of his work, that, however steadfast and unswerving a painter's aim may be, it is

impossible for him to put forth his greatest powers whilst the demand of the country is for what is trivial and shallow.

In the meantime, however, the seed already sown by Hunt and Millais was bearing considerable fruit, for Ruskin writes in his *Academy Notes* for 1858, "The rooms are filled with more or less successful works by the disciples of the Pre-Raphaelite school, which, as I stated five years ago it would, has entirely prevailed against all opposition ; sweeping away in its strong current many of the opposers themselves, whirling them hither and thither, for the moment, in its eddies. . . ."

Hunt outlines in his book a typical day's work during the period which we have now reached. He began upon his replicas at nine in the morning, but abandoned his easel for an hour or two each day in order to attend to his sister and others whom he was instructing. Upon returning to his own work he was obliged to expend the utmost vigour upon it on account of the drying of the paint, and in this way he toiled on until darkness fell. Then came a brief space for dinner, after which he went to the Life School and worked at his ill-paid illustrations for books. Add to these strenuous exertions an extensive correspondence, with all the troubles of housekeeping, and a fair notion of Hunt's life at this time can be formed. During the progress of these multifarious occupations the unfinished Temple picture was turned to the wall awaiting better days.

XII

ASSISTANCE AT LAST 1858 TO 1860

THE monotony of his daily task was at times agreeably varied by meetings with friends, among whom Tennyson took a prominent place. Hearing one summer day from Woolner that Hunt was worn out with work, the wife of the poet sent a pressing invitation to him to pay a visit to Farringford, which he gratefully accepted. It was the first time he had met Mrs. Tennyson ; he pronounced her to be a fitting helpmate to such a kingly poet, and in the course of the sojourn he was much impressed by an attempt of Tennyson to decorate in colour the panes of a certain window which admitted no view but that of a brick wall. The poet was greatly troubled by the curiosity of strangers who waited about near his house to catch glimpses of him. He related that on one occasion a man actually entered his garden when the family sat at lunch, and could be seen by those at table flattening his nose against the window-pane, and heard to say to another, " You can see him well from here ! "

During the visit Hunt enjoyed much familiar intercourse with the poet, by whose simplicity and naïveté he was deeply impressed. In the greatest men there is always a strong element of the childlike, and this was the case with Tennyson, of whom Hunt writes, " His frankness of speech was like that of a child, whose unembarrassed penetration surprises the conventional mind." And he it here said that much of the charm of Hunt himself and of his

works—much, indeed, of their greatness—owes its existence to his childlike frankness, his freedom from the sophistication which disfigures many a man of lesser genius. It has been seen in the narrative of his adventures in Palestine how firmly he shunned falsehood, even under circumstances which some would consider to provide ample excuse for it. In this respect he again shows a marked similarity to Tennyson. It was the absolute sincerity and candour of the two men, united to their love of gentle nature, which made this visit of Hunt's such a happy one. Allowing for certain differences of temperament it may be said, with some degree of truth, that in their capacity as landscape artists these two men resembled one another as much as poet and painter have ever done. Referring to his departure from Farringford, Hunt says, "My holiday brought balm and health to me, and I went back to my work with renewed zest."

He relates an amusing incident connected with the poet which took place on another occasion, and which is altogether characteristic. Mrs. Prinsep had persuaded Tennyson to accompany her to her house in Kensington under promise that he should be invited to see no guests but those whom he wished to, and Hunt was asked to join him. They had not been there long before the poet unwisely descended to the garden and approached his hostess, then engaged in welcoming "a quick succession of guests." Thus he was in a moment surrounded by visitors, and Mrs. Prinsep took the opportunity of introducing to him a gentleman described as "the Editor of the *Midnight Beacon*." "Tennyson silently blinked at him with his head craned. The lady felt the need of overcoming the awkwardness of the position, and ejaculated, 'Mr. Tennyson is delighted to make your acquaintance!' Tennyson, with the stranger still

standing waiting, turned to Mrs. Prinsep and said enquiringly but without petulance, 'What made you say that? I did not say that I was delighted to make his acquaintance'; and this query dispersed the little group with the best grace each could assume, leaving Tennyson unintended master of the situation." Such touches as these reveal the man more truly than many a page of biography.

A little time after his stay at Farringford we find Hunt comfortably settled in Oxford with his friends and benefactors, the Combes, engaged upon the replicas he had been obliged by poverty to undertake, among which was his smaller version of *The Hireling Shepherd*. Valuable time was passing, *The Finding of Christ* was still awaiting 'better days for its completion, and the country was suffering irreparable loss because one of her best painters, having met with scant recognition, was obliged to curtail his output of original work for the sake of paying his rent. He writes in one of his articles in the *Contemporary Review*: "For four years after my return to England I had to keep *The Finding of the Saviour* often with its face to the wall while I was working at pot-boilers, to get the means to advance it at all." By how much the richer would England have been at the present day had her people offered even moderate encouragement to Holman Hunt.

Happily there were a few—a very few—who really understood his work, and among them was Combe of Oxford; who, full of regret at seeing Hunt's genius so long confined to the repetition of ideas that had been used up some years before, now came forward with the offer of a loan of £300 to enable the Temple picture to be completed.

Having returned to London, he joyfully resumed the abandoned work, able now to hire all the models that he

needed for the figures ; and when it drew towards completion he began to wonder how best to dispose of it at a price in any way proportional to the labour it had entailed. The question of the sale arose one day in a conversation with Wilkie Collins. Collins had seen the picture, and now admonished Hunt " to take care and get a thundering big price for it," if he wished to escape beggary. Hunt replied that he had fears that no one would be prepared to pay sufficient to recompense him for the time, labour and money expended ; that even £1,500 would not remunerate him sufficiently to enable him to begin upon another Eastern subject. Collins then asked how much he considered to be a fair price, and Hunt named the sum of 5,500 guineas, remarking that such an amount had never been paid in England for a modern picture. The matter was further discussed, and, in conclusion, Collins strongly advised him to seek practical advice ; and to seek this from one of the most violent abusers of early Pre-Raphaelitism, one who had described the figure of Mary in Millais' *Christ in the House of His Parents* as nothing better than " a Monster in the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest gin shop in England "—namely from Charles Dickens.

It can be well understood with what surprise Hunt received this suggestion. But, since the exhibition of Millais' much abused early work, a reconciliation had taken place between the painter and the novelist, and the latter had actually expressed appreciation of the genius and character of Millais. So that, after further persuasion from Wilkie Collins, who promised to mention the subject to Dickens, Hunt waived all scruples and decided to comply. He had already met Dickens on several occasions, one of which was during the acting of Collins' *The Frozen Deep* which he had been invited to see at Tavistock House a few

years previously, in January, 1857—a play which met with such brilliant success that it was repeated several times at Dickens' house, and publicly performed in the summer of the same year in memory of Douglas Jerrold and in aid of his family.

Soon after the conversation with Collins, Hunt received a second invitation to Tavistock House, where he was cordially welcomed by Dickens, who immediately proceeded to deal with the matter in hand. Hunt describes his personal appearance in the following words: "He was then forty-eight years of age. . . . in these later days all the bones of his face showed, giving it truly statuesque dignity, and every line of his brow and face was a record of past struggle and of present power to paint humanity in its numberless phases." The conversation is given in detail in Hunt's book. Dickens enquired how long the picture had taken to complete, and the reply was six years, with many intervals on smaller works. He then asked how much time had been devoted to it at Jerusalem, what the journey and the sojourn in Palestine had cost, and, finally, what were the sources of revenue for the dealer, should he buy the picture. Hunt entered into all these points, and Dickens then pronounced his verdict: "You say you want 5,500 guineas," said he; "you ought to have it, and I decide that a business man can afford to give it to you, and your business man, I feel pretty sure, *will* give it to you; but you must consider that he will not get his return immediately, and you must give him time; let him pay you £1,500 down, another £1,000 in six months, and the other sums at periods extending over two and a half or three years. You will find that he will not throw away the chance, but do not let it drag along, tell him you want to be free to make other plans."

After he had departed Hunt regretted that for the sake of

obtaining his opinion of the picture he had not invited Dickens to see it.

He was now living in Kensington, and thither to his studio came several important people to see the famous work then drawing near completion. The Duchess of Argyll had called two years previously, and since then others had learnt of its reputation. Mulready, Sir Charles and Lady Eastlake, the former then President of the Academy, were among the visitors. The President was unsparing in his compliments, and before he left he expressed a strong desire that the picture should be exhibited at the Academy, offering, to Hunt's surprise, to give the work a place of honour and to provide it with a railing as a protection against the press of people. Hunt's opinion of the Academy has already been referred to. A refusal was of course inevitable, and the President was obliged to recognize the proposition as an impossibility in the case of a man so conscientious and so full of sincerity towards his art.

Next came negotiations with Gambart, the famous dealer, whose growing impatience to know the price was clearly evident. Upon the latter being stated he expressed unbounded amazement, and affirmed that no one had ever heard of such a sum.

"I quite admit that," said Hunt calmly. "You are called upon only to consider whether you can afford it."

Again a protest from the other; but Hunt maintained his position, declaring that he would not abate a farthing.

Gambart urged him to take time to consider, but he repeated his assurance that no amount of thought would cause him to change his mind.

"Well," said the dealer, "leave it open for a week."

Hunt allowed him three or four days for reflection, at the end of which, to his great relief, came the acceptance. "To

finish a long task," says Hunt, "and send it forth to the world is a greater lightening of the heart than many men apprehend."

William Rossetti, in a letter to W. Bell Scott, writes on the 14th May, 1860: "The sale of Hunt's picture is now settled . . . Gambart buys the picture with copyright for £5,500 [*sic*] of which £3,000 was to be paid last Wednesday, and the remainder in bills at eighteen months."¹

It was towards the middle of April that the finishing touches were applied; and before long it was framed in accordance with a design by Hunt himself. Millais, when he saw it on the morning of its first public exhibition, pronounced the whole to be "like a jewel in a gorgeous setting." People flocked to see it, and on some days the receipts at the door were as much as £30. Among the visitors to the gallery one day was the Prince Consort, whom the attendant happened to recognize just as he was about to depart after giving up hope of obtaining a view of it. The attendant instantly approached him and asked to be allowed to send the picture to Windsor for the Queen's inspection—a proposal which was gladly accepted. And when it came back Hunt was cheered by a message of royal appreciation.

Not long after he had come to terms with Gambart he happened to meet Thackeray at the Cosmopolitan Club. The novelist greeted him with the words—"God bless my living soul! here we are in the presence of the happiest man of the day. I hope that what I hear is true that you have sold a picture for 5,500 guineas?" Hunt assured him that it *was* true, and the novelist, wholly ignorant of the time and labour absorbed by such a work, continued, "Now, you are still a young man, and to have got so handsome a sum for

¹ *Autobiography of W. B. Scott*, Vol. II, Ch. IV.

one picture, and that I hear not a large one, is a truly wonderful piece of good fortune, and I congratulate you heartily; you have cause to be jubilant."

Hunt was then obliged to explain how the matter really stood—that his expenses had been great, that heavy debts must be met before the full payment of the price, and money invested in order to secure an income sufficient to enable another picture to be carried out. Thackeray, however still maintained his optimism, comparing his own early struggles with Hunt's more hopeful circumstances and declaring that, after all, 5,500 guineas at the age of thirty-three was "a good turning point in a man's fortune." He alluded to his early poverty, and related how he had on one occasion been refused the advance of £20 for a contribution to a magazine, adding—"You needn't, my dear fellow, any longer be thus driven from pillar to post to get such a sum, and I am sincerely glad of it." Then, after an "Ah me!" and a brief withdrawal, he returned to Hunt and continued, "But you are, after all, a lucky dog, for you have something more than a miserable remnant or salvage of a life in which to do your work."

Dickens' comment to the painter upon the success of his picture was, "You have caused my hatter to be madder than ever. He declares that you have choked up Bond Street with the carriages for your exhibition, so that none of his established customers can get to his shop."

The Finding of Christ in the Temple did actually mark a turning point in the painter's life, for with its successful sale ended the worst of his financial troubles. It also marks a definite stage in his artistic career. Hitherto the greater number of his most important works had behind them a definite moral thought. In a letter to Millais, dated the 10th November, 1854, we find a faint hint at the feelings

that had been expressing themselves through the medium of his art. He writes: "After all, your letter was full of sad incidents, notably the horrible death of the landlord of the inn. Such things make me despair of the world." It was his sensitiveness to the evils of the day which led to the didactic element in his works during the several years that preceded his visit to Palestine; and this remark of his, though connected with a particular incident, reveals his attitude to the world in general. Like Thackeray and Dickens he was filled with dismay at the defects of contemporary civilization, and like them he strove to indicate in his works the way to a better life. Thus we have *The Hireling Shepherd*, painted "in rebuke of the sectarian vanities and vital negligences of the day," *Strayed Sheep*, a small offshoot of the larger work painted with a similar motif, *The Light of the World*, in which the deadly influence of a closed conscience is symbolically portrayed, and finally *The Awakened Conscience*, where we find the horror of sin suddenly overpowering the mind of a fallen girl. Moreover, the evils of the world still constituted Hunt's leading motive when he painted *The Scapegoat*, in which is symbolically set forth the only remedy for sin, namely, the power of Christ. This set of five pictures forms a group to itself, and one of considerable importance, since it places Hunt among the great artists and writers who have striven by their works to exert a moral influence upon the world.

But *The Finding of Christ in the Temple* marks the beginning of the period during which it was Hunt's primary aim to reconstruct past history, and the subjects which came to his mind were first and foremost those connected with the gospel narrative, which had ever held powerful sway over his life. In visiting the scenes amid which those stirring events had taken place he was brought into close touch with

the types of life and scenery of the then never-changing Palestine, and there was thus granted him a vision of the richness of colour of which the East is capable both in the dresses of its people and in its sky and landscape. Such opportunities were of the utmost importance, and when he began upon his representation of the gospel scenes he possessed a knowledge which all other great painters of scriptural subjects had lacked. No artist has realized so truly in his works as Hunt has done the external aspect of the life of Christ ; and if by so doing he has sometimes failed in sublimity of design, it is only because in his pursuit of truth he was obliged to submit to this sacrifice.

The picture is of absorbing interest and requires close study in order to elicit its full meaning. The following are a few notes as to its principal parts. The distant figures in the central background are those of a Jewish family which has first entered the hall. One of the men carries a lamb to be offered as a sacrifice for the first-born (in the arms of a woman), the lamb having been obtained from a seller of animals who stands behind holding back the bleating ewe from which it has been taken. Nearer to the Rabbis a boy can be seen driving doves out of the building, and in the left background a man is engaged in lighting the lamps. Outside, on the right of the picture, builders are at work upon the Temple of Herod, behind which is an exquisite view of the city under a sky of pale green and yellow. On the uppermost of the steps leading to the hall sits a lame beggar. In the main portion of the picture is represented a group of Rabbis seated on a curved divan, and a glance at these will show the painter's marvellous power of characterization. The first on the left, blind, as is shown by the whiteness of his eyes, holds a large roll of the Law against his breast, part of the covering of which is being kissed by one



THE FINDING OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

By permission of the Museum and Art Gallery Committee of the Corporation of Birmingham

of the Levite boys in the rear, and near this Rabbi kneels a boy with a fly-flap in his hand. A phylactery can be seen bound to the forehead of another Rabbi, and one in the hand of the neighbour of the first mentioned. A younger Rabbi has an unrolled copy of the Law in front of him, and not far away another is about to drink a bowl of wine poured out by an attendant. Finally, the principal figures are—the boy Christ in a striped robe of bright purple, Mary, who is tenderly drawing him towards herself with a look and attitude which are not easily forgotten, and Joseph, who has stretched out his hand to the boy's shoulder. The mature richness and dignity of this picture, with its wealth of bright colour and the delicacy and refinement of its workmanship, are not slow to catch the attention of the spectator who for the first time enters the room in which it is hung; and upon a minute inspection of the texture one seems to see in the perfect smoothness with which the colour has been laid on—a smoothness characteristic of the whole of Hunt's work—all the loving care that was expended upon this great painting during the long years of its growth.

XIII

MARRIAGE AND BEREAVEMENT

1860 TO 1869

SOON after the exhibition of his picture, Hunt was invited to a breakfast given in Carlton House Terrace by Mrs. Gladstone, during which boxing and prize-fighting formed one of the topics. In referring to a recent contest that had been accompanied by considerable brutality, Mrs. Gladstone expressed the profoundest horror of it, which her husband fully endorsed. Hunt, however, remained silent; observing which Mrs. Gladstone forthwith appealed to him to declare his views. He was obliged, therefore, to explain that though he regarded pugilism as savage he had a still greater horror of the use of murderous weapons in the settling of quarrels; and that he considered that if prize-fighting were abolished the proficiency of English school-boys in the art of boxing would greatly diminish, and that, in consequence, when later in life any of them happened to be travelling in savage lands, and were attacked by natives, they would be the worse off for their lack of pugilistic skill. His meaning was that in such cases it was better to use strength of arm as a means of defence than to have recourse to the knife or pistol. But the lady would have none of it. "This was a dreadful confession of faith," writes Hunt, "which I could see shocked Mrs. Gladstone profoundly."

An interesting event which took place in the summer of 1860 was the marriage of Charles Alston Collins to Dickens' daughter, Kate. Hunt was among the guests invited to Gad's Hill, and he refers thus to the occasion: "It was a

lovely day, and when the ladies left the room [after the breakfast] and we stood up, no more graceful leader of a wedding band could have been seen than the new bride." Dickens was overstrained and inclined to be argumentative, a disposition which revealed itself in a discussion that took place between him and Hunt as to the merits of a certain painting of the Sphinx by Roberts, which hung in the room. At the conclusion of the breakfast Hunt went for a drive about Rochester with John Forster and the mother of the bridegroom.

We learn from a letter written in June, 1860, by Lady Trevelyan to W. B. Scott that Hunt had responded to the call of the nation for volunteers, when, after the outbreak of war between France, Piedmont and Austria, it was generally feared there would be an invasion of England. She writes: "Holman Hunt spent an evening here very well and jolly. He is finishing up odds and ends that have been put aside for the great picture, and is very diligent at rifle-drill." Tennyson had published in the *Times* in May of the preceding year his rousing lines *Riflemen, Form!* Men offered themselves in thousands for the defence of the country, and an Artists' Corps was formed as part of the Volunteer movement. Hunt and Watts were among those who were at present undergoing rifle-drill.

It was in this same year that he began his picture entitled *Il dolce far Niente* (finished at a later date), and the designing of *The Afterglow*. Then came a welcome respite in the form of a tour in Cornwall with Tennyson, Palgrave, Woolner and Val Prinsep, which for Hunt and Prinsep, who joined the others in the Scilly Isles, began in the early part of September, 1860, and terminated at the end of the month. A day was spent by Hunt on these islands, and then the party, after a visit to Land's End, returned to

Penzance, whence they went on to Helston and the Lizard, Hunt in his book gives an amusing account of the assiduity with which Palgrave attended upon the poet at all times of the day and in all places, to the evident annoyance of Tennyson who was struggling all the time to gain leisure among the romantic Cornish scenes for quiet thought and work. It had been agreed that for the sake of avoiding a crowd of sightseers Tennyson's name should be kept a secret, and yet one or other of the party was continually uttering it aloud, Palgrave appearing to take a delight in doing so. Tennyson's protest, whenever the rule was broken, was, "Why do you always use my name? You must understand the danger of someone noting it, and instituting inquiries, which would result in discovery, and then we should be mobbed out of the place." Palgrave's carelessness as to Tennyson's wishes, his references to the poet when speaking to the landlord as "the old gentleman," and his determination to follow him wherever he went, reduced Tennyson to a state of inward irritation which manifested itself in sundry argumentations and bickerings between the Laureate and his friend, and was prolonged until the end of the tour.

On the 11th September, so we read in Tennyson's diary, the party was established at the *Three Tuns*,¹ the Lizard, where, according to Hunt, the conversation was still apt to end in wrangling, and where, during the various expeditions, the cliffs resounded with the name of Tennyson the moment the poet happened to get separated from the persevering Palgrave. On the 20th September Tennyson dates his

¹ The name of this house has long ceased to be remembered locally, but I am told that at the time of this visit it was simply a farm. Since then it has been enlarged and entirely altered, having been turned into what is now known as Hill's Hotel. A letter written by Palgrave in 1893 and referring to Tennyson's visit was framed by the proprietor and is still preserved at the hotel.

diary-entry from Falmouth, and says that he had "left Hunt and Val Prinsep hard at work at the Lizard, sketching on a promontory." Both the artists had set to work upon drawings of Asparagus Island, Kynance; Tennyson was making notes for a poem, and the days would have passed quite peacefully were it not for the inevitable disputes in which the poet found himself involved. One night they reached a climax, and, taking up his candlestick to go to bed, Tennyson said, "Each must do as he thinks best, but I have no doubt what to do. There is no pleasure for any of us in this wrangling, and I shall to-morrow go on to Falmouth and take the train home."

Hunt and Prinsep were sitting together after the others had gone to bed (Woolner was no longer with the party) when the poet suddenly appeared in his slippers and addressed them in the following words: "I've come down to say to you young fellows that I'm very sorry if I seem to be the cause of all the bickerings that go on between Palgrave and myself. It is, I know, calculated to spoil your holiday, and that would be a great shame. I don't mean to quarrel with anyone, but all day long I am trying to get a quiet moment for reflection about things. Sometimes I want to compose a stanza or two, and find a quiet nook where I may wind off my words, but ere I have completed a couplet I hear Palgrave's voice like a bee in a bottle making the neighbourhood resound with my name, and I have to give myself up to escape the consequences." He then repeated his intention of going to Falmouth, adding, "but I hope you all will stay and enjoy yourselves."

Next morning a dog-cart came to carry the poet and his luggage away; but, perceiving this, Palgrave instantly ran for his luggage and took his place beside him before the vehicle had set off. The poet protested, but the other

declared that he had promised Mrs. Tennyson never to leave him to travel alone. "As the pair were driven away," says Hunt, "we heard the two arguing as to whether such watchfulness was necessary." It was discovered afterwards that on one of the walls of the inn, among a heterogeneous group of signatures, Palgrave had neatly inscribed a cartouch bearing the names of his party, with that of Tennyson at the head.

Having continued their work at Kynance for two or three days, Hunt and Prinsep followed Tennyson to Falmouth, where they spent a few days with the Misses Fox, Tennyson having already departed on account of the appearance of a notice in a local paper advertising his presence there. Caroline Fox, in her published journals, gives us a glimpse of Hunt at this time: "September 28. Holman Hunt and his big artist friend, Val Prinsep, arrived, and we were presently on the most friendly footing. The former is a very genial, young-looking creature, with a large, square, yellow beard, clear blue laughing eyes, and a nose with a merry little upward turn in it, dimples in the cheek, and the whole expression sunny and full of simple boyish happiness. His voice is most musical, and there is nothing in his look or bearing, spite of the strongly-marked forehead, to suggest the High Priest of Pre-Raphaelitism, the Ponderer over such themes as the *Scapegoat*, *The Light of the World*, or *Christ among the Doctors*, which is his last six years' work. . . . He spoke of Tennyson and his surprise at the spirited, suggestive little paintings of strange beasts which he had painted on the windows of his summer-house to shut out an ugly view. Holman Hunt is so frank and open, and so unspoiled by the admiration he has excited; he does not talk 'shop,' but is perfectly willing to tell you anything you really wish to know of his painting, etc."

They returned home by way of Salisbury and Stonehenge, and a new period of work began, during which Hunt painted a portrait of the Rt. Hon. Stephen Lushington (1862), completed *The Afterglow* and the original study for *The Finding in the Temple*, and painted his *London Bridge*, which he sketched in all its splendour on the night of the marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales, the 10th March, 1863. News now reached him that *The Finding in the Temple* had narrowly escaped destruction by fire. A canopy had been erected to prevent the reflection of the spectators in the glass of this picture, and in the winter 1860-1861 a row of gas lights had been fixed close above it, with the result that the canopy one day caught fire and fell blazing to the floor. There was only a single pail of unfrozen water within reach, and disaster to the picture was averted by the prompt and gracious act of a lady who happened to be among the retreating spectators; she took from her shoulders a valuable Indian shawl and threw it to the attendant, who succeeded in putting out the fire with it before serious harm was done. This lady was immediately advertised for but never made herself known, and it was not until years had passed that Hunt learnt that his benefactress was his friend, Lady Trevelyan.

The pictures just named were the principal works produced during the interval between the completion of the *Temple* picture and his second foreign tour. In 1861 he had been working near Oxford, where his fame had attracted a good deal of attention, for we read in a letter written by Lear to Chichester Fortescue on the 21st September: "Holman Hunt writes very amusingly from Oxford, near which he is painting in a field, but has been discovered: and people send him out luncheons—five or six parties, and troops of ladies trudge across fields with Albums for his

Autograph.”¹ The *London Bridge*, when completed, was exhibited in a gallery in Hanover Street, together with, among others, *The Afterglow* and Martineau’s *The Last Day in the Old Home*. An interesting account is given by Hunt of a visit of the recently married Prince and Princess of Wales to this gallery. After examining the other pictures the Prince naturally turned with the greatest interest to the *London Bridge*. “Where is the Princess? where am I?” he asked, searching with his eye among the crowd. Hunt explained that the picture dealt only with the occasion of the marriage, and was intended to show the crowds viewing the illuminations; and the Prince then proceeded to ask further questions. All of a sudden his eye lighted upon the figure of Hunt’s friend, Combe of Oxford, which had been introduced into the crowd, and which in spite of its minute size the Prince recognized instantly. “I know that man!” he exclaimed. “Wait a minute; I have seen him in the hunting-field with Lord Macclesfield’s hounds. He rides a clever pony about fourteen hands high, and his beard blows over his shoulders. He is the head of a house at Oxford, not a college. . . .” and the Prince gradually recollected further details, recognizing the name when repeated to him.

In the midst of his activities Hunt found time for social diversions. Earlier in life he used to refer to dancing as having no interest for him, saying that he left such frivolities to his sisters; but now he readily accepted invitations to balls and was anxious to become proficient in dancing. Janet Ross refers to him at this time in her reminiscences. “At a ball at the Nassau Seniors’,” she writes, “I was amused by Holman Hunt asking me whether he had not improved in his dancing. I complimented him on it, but

¹ *Early Letters of Edward Lear*, ed. by Lady Strachey.

told him he must still practise hard before he could rival Leighton or Millais."¹

In the same year that the *London Bridge* picture was begun Hunt was among those who were summoned to give evidence before the Royal Commission as to the reforms of which the Royal Academy was so sorely in need. And not many years after the royal wedding an important event took place in his own life—his marriage in 1865 to Fanny Waugh, one of the daughters of George Waugh, and granddaughter to Alexander Waugh, a Scottish divine who died in 1827. "Ah!" he writes, "if I permitted myself to linger over the pastures of personal romance which the members of our community traversed, how much greater would be the gleanings of human interest I could bring with me." We know nothing of the ups and downs which preceded this short but happy union, but his young wife lives before us in the portrait he drew of her in 1866, a portrait which bears evidence to no little sweetness of disposition and gentleness of character.

Another portrait which he painted during these years is referred to by Lear in a letter to Fortescue dated the 21st April, 1865: "Holman Hunt has painted a most remarkable picture. Mrs. T. Fairbairn and five children. Its only fault is that some day all the figures will certainly come to life and walk out of the canvas—leaving only the landscape; such reality is there. You will see it at the Hunt gallery."²

It had long been his wish to return to Palestine for further work there, but his family was in need of money, and their dependence upon him considerably delayed the carrying out of his projects, which, after the experience of

¹ *The Fourth Generation*, by Janet Ross.

² *Later Letters of Edward Lear*, ed. by Lady Strachey.

past difficulties, he did not dare to undertake unless adequately provided. Another reason for delay, mentioned by himself, was the fact that his sister was still dependent upon his tuition, and that he was unwilling to leave her before she had advanced sufficiently to enable her work to be carried on independently. It was for her that he designed his picture of pigeons, entitled *The Festival of St. Swithin*. She had grown tired of it, and, seeing that it had been abandoned, Hunt, who had so far done nearly all of it himself, decided to bring it to completion; this also necessitated delay. He was on the point of arranging for his departure to the East when a misfortune fell upon him. A bank in which he held shares suddenly failed, his shares in consequence became valueless, and he was obliged to sell other property in order to raise money. The loss was a serious one, in that it left him just as poor as he had been on his first sojourn in Palestine. But delay was no longer possible, and in August, 1866, he left England with his wife, and, as before, travelled across France to Marseilles. Here, however, he was informed that on account of an outbreak of cholera in the French port no ship from thence was allowed to enter Egypt. This necessitated a change of plan, and it was decided to cross the Alps to Leghorn and to approach Egypt from Italy. At Florence he learnt that Italy was under a similar ban, so that for the moment it was impossible for him to pursue his journey. He decided to settle down in Florence, and, having taken a studio, was soon at work on *Isabella and the Pot of Basil*, a picture which marks a momentary return to the favourite material of more youthful days.

His stay in Florence was destined to be a long one, for it was not until the autumn of the following year that it came to an end. In a letter which he writes to Millais from 14,

Lung Arno Acciagoli, Florence (26th May, 1867), he speaks gravely of the need that every man should put his talents to the highest possible use. He then refers to certain comments in the foreign press in which English art is spoken of in disparaging terms, and continues in words that are not without their significance in view of the then trend of Millais' artistic activities: "In seriousness and importance of subject we are far behind where we should be, seeing that we have about eight or ten really great painters, amongst whom J. E. Millais has the highest powers of all. You must not be testy with me that I revert to this subject. Remember that lately I have had many reasons to think of the perennial interests of life." And then he goes on to refer to the brevity of human existence in terms of solemnity and sadness which we are not accustomed to find coming from his pen. This letter, in which there is evidence of a previous divergence of opinion, is in part intended to persuade Millais of the lasting value of art and of the waste of talent that results when men of genius devote their powers to subjects of ephemeral worth; but the tone of almost morbid sadness that appears in a portion I have not quoted had its origin in deeper causes, for not long previously the greatest of all sorrows had come to him—the illness and death of his young wife a few days before Christmas, 1866.

One is reminded by this short-lived marriage and its sudden grievous termination, of a similar bereavement that took place in the life of an American poet—Longfellow; and the suggestion of similarity does not end with the mere circumstance; like Longfellow, and all those whose thoughts and feelings penetrate beneath the surface, Hunt was so reserved in his expressions of grief that few, if any, knew anything of the terrible desolation that was overshadowing

his life and remained with him year after year, while he struggled against the multitudinous difficulties incidental to his work. W. B. Scott, in writing of him, says that his temperament was of the kind which as a rule showed no emotion, and that even when taken by surprise he gave no signs of being much affected. In a strong and profound character such as Hunt's this apparent indifference denotes a capacity for suffering which is altogether beyond the grasp of those accustomed to express every shade of feeling. It is necessary to lay stress upon this point in order to convey an adequate impression of the grief which was to haunt him during the years that were to come, when externally all appeared calm and genial.

He remained in Florence until September, 1867, having placed his bereaved child (a son) under the care of his friends Spencer Stanhope and his wife, and then returned with him to England. *Isabella and the Pot of Basil*, being by this time completed, was sold to Gambart and exhibited. Soon after his return he was elected member of the Athenæum Club, and, though his stay in England lasted only a few months, he had much intercourse with his old friends, including Charles Collins and Dickens, paying frequent visits to Gad's Hill.

He was now in weak health, and when in 1868 he returned alone to Florence to see to the completion of a monument for the grave of his wife (begun before he had left) he was obliged to live for a time at Fiesole, where he painted a small picture, entitled *The Tuscan Straw-Plaiter*, and a few water-colour landscapes. In Florence he painted another small work, entitled *Bianca*, beginning it in tempera after the manner of the old masters, and completing it in oil varnish. He then paid a visit to his old friend, Dr. Sim, at Naples; and, after a stay of three weeks at Salerno and

Ravello, returned to Florence, where he found that the sculptor engaged in chiselling the monument was making such slow progress that he was obliged to finish it himself. Former practice in carving enabled him to do this without difficulty by the aid of the sculptor's own tools.

This second sojourn in Italy lasted a good many months, for he tells us that he was not able to leave for the East until the summer of 1869. Before his departure he paid a visit to Venice, where on the Piazza one day at the end of June, he suddenly found himself face to face with none other than Ruskin, who had been there since the middle of May, and was on the point of penetrating to the depths of the meaning of Carpaccio's interesting works. Hunt expressed his delight at the meeting, and the pleasure which he would feel in viewing the Venetian works of art in the company of the very man who had first led him to an appreciation of their beauty. He describes Ruskin at that time as "faultlessly groomed," and wearing a soft felt hat; in height close upon six feet, yet spare of limb; his hair rusty in shade, eyes bluish grey, complexion pink and freckled, and skin transparent, showing violet veins about the eyes.

The two immediately took gondola for the Church of San Rocco (Ruskin accompanied by a valet), whence, having examined the paintings there, they passed on to the Scuola di San Rocco, where they became deep in the study of Tintoretto and his symbolism, which must have made a particular appeal to Hunt. As they were lingering in front of *The Annunciation*, Ruskin in the course of some remarks said, "Now, my dear Holman, we will see what I wrote about it twenty or more years ago. I have not read a word of it since. I have no doubt that it will be marked by much boyish presumption and by inflated expression; I warn you of this, but it may be interesting to compare it with our

present view, at least my own ; so I will call my man." He then summoned the valet, who appeared with a volume of the original edition of *Modern Painters*, which Ruskin took and opened at the passage referred to. The famous description of Tintoretto's *Annunciation* was then read aloud, and Hunt says that the words recalled to his mind "the little bedroom, twenty-two years since, wherein I sat till the early morning reading the same passage with marvel." Closing the book Ruskin said, "No, there is no exaggeration or bombast such as there might have been, the words are all justified, and they describe very faithfully the character of the picture ; I am well content."

After examining other works of Tintoretto, they reached the room containing his great *Crucifixion*—a picture before which more than one visitor to the Scuola, including Ruskin himself in earlier days, has stood amazed at its power—where Hunt tells us they remained for fully an hour before *Modern Painters* was again called for. "How many," says Hunt, "I thought, would envy me as I listened to his precise and emphatic reading of the ever memorable passage in which he describes this picture, and as I heard him say, 'No, again I decide that what I wrote in past years is well.' " "And," adds Hunt, "it was well ! "

Let us now hear Ruskin's comment upon this visit to San Rocco. In a letter dated the 1st July, 1869, he writes to his mother : "The painter, Holman Hunt, is here, and yesterday I showed him the Scuola di San Rocco, and I thought again if there could have been got two photographs—one of the piazza at Verona, with Longfellow and me, and another of Tintoret's *Annunciation*, with Holman Hunt and me examining it—both of them would find some sale with the British public."¹

¹ Cook's *Life of Ruskin*, Vol. II, Ch. IX.

At the end of the day's tour Ruskin took Hunt to dine at Danieli's, and after the meal addressed him as follows: "I want to ask you whether, when you said to me this morning that you were so pleased to see me, you merely spoke in passing compliment, or with serious meaning?"

"What would make you doubt that I spoke with anything but deliberate candour?" asked Hunt.

"Because," was the reply, "for these many years, if you wanted to see me, Camberwell not being many miles from Campden Hill, you could easily have come to me, or asked me to come to you, and you have not done either."

Hunt then gave his reasons, indicating that one of them had been the marriage of Millais. But he added, "I confess that I might of late have stolen some occasion to see such a friend as you, had there not been further difficulties which I will not enter into."

"Tell me," exclaimed Ruskin: "I do particularly want you to be unreserved."

The explanation was forthcoming, and related to Rossetti and some of his associates, the profligacy of whose lives certainly did not harmonize with Ruskin's teaching.

"I may be quite wrong," said Hunt, "in my estimate of some of the characters who formed the band of men you had about you, but in my eyes they were so distinctly a bar to me, that, had you been the Archangel Michael himself, these satellites would have kept me away."

There was a pause, and Ruskin replied, "You are quite right, Holman, I never was a good judge of character, and I have had some most objectionable people about me."

I have given the foregoing conversations as they are reported by Hunt, whose remarkably tenacious memory enabled him to recall them years after they had taken place. At this point the subject changed to that of religious belief,

and Ruskin spoke of the passing phase of scepticism that had cast its shadow upon his life. I shall not enter into the discussion that ensued, since the evidence of Sir Edward T. Cook¹ tends to show that, though verbally accurate, Hunt's report of it fails to catch the manner in which Ruskin's words were spoken, and in consequence produces a somewhat false impression of his actual state of mind.

The two visited other parts of Venice together, and a full report, did such a thing exist, of their comments on the various pictures they examined would have been singularly interesting and instructive. It is generally recognized in these days that truth to life is essential to all good works of fiction, but it is perhaps not so well understood that a painting must also be a true representation of nature if it is to be of lasting value. It is impossible to arrive at beauty in art if truth is sacrificed, and this fact constitutes the very centre of the teaching both of Ruskin and of Hunt. Ruskin possessed a critical insight, and a power of analysis hardly to be equalled in the world's history; but no amount of labour or study would have enabled him to become a great painter. Hunt was far less gifted in a literary sense, as well as less able to analyse what he saw in a work of art, but he had in him all the makings of a great painter. Ruskin could draw and paint from nature with exquisite beauty and truth, though he could not compose a picture; whereas Hunt united this skill of hand and mind with great powers of design and composition. They were both pre-eminently reformers, but, of the two, Ruskin possessed the clearer vision of the world's needs. Though Hunt knew full well what it was to be rejected by the world, by no stretch of the imagination could he enter into Ruskin's mind and

¹ See his notes in the Library edition of Ruskin's works, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 661-3.

share the grief and dejection experienced when a vision of what things might have been was rendered more and more a source of pain by the unteachableness of humanity ; with the result that the two could never become friends in the more intimate sense of the word. And yet, allowing for Hunt's limitations of vision, the two were as closely united as any two men could be in their common love of truth.

Leaving Venice, Hunt now travelled to Rome, where, in the company of a friend, Captain Luard, he visited most of the galleries and " swam daily in the Tiber, glad to find that the strong current could not prevent us from covering about a hundred yards ere our strength was spent in the struggle." He was soon at Naples, where he embarked at last for Palestine.

XIV

JERUSALEM AND "THE SHADOW OF DEATH" 1869 TO 1874

HUNT's first task upon reaching Jerusalem was to find a suitable house; and this he was not long in achieving. His new abode, he tells us, had a weird reputation, being regarded by all as under an evil spell. Writing to W. B. Scott on the 7th April, 1870, he says: "You should see how grand I am in my desolate house; it is about large enough for a family of ten or twelve, and I walk in dismal dignity about the unfriended rooms. Two servants attend upon me, and sometimes a country man or woman is staying here as a possible model. I assure you, at first starting, even with my old experience, it required no ordinary perseverance and energy to get to work. . . . The difficulties were all the greater to me because I had altogether forgotten my Arabic at first."

Whilst certain necessary alterations were in progress he was able to make a beginning upon a subject which had already worked itself out in his imagination, namely an incident in the daily labour of Christ as carpenter. He visited many native carpenters at work, and went to Bethlehem, where he both studied the traditional tools used by carpenters and carried out some of the painting in open sunlight on a flat roof, selecting models from among the inhabitants. He lived in a tent at Bethlehem during the autumn and part of the winter of 1869; and, as soon as his house was in readiness, he returned to Jerusalem and settled down in loneliness and desolation.

At night "the windows rattled as though beset with angry spirits," and, outside, the wind whistled and beat upon the casements, which were sometimes burst open by its force, when the lamp would be extinguished and Hunt would be left in total darkness. Thunderstorms occasionally took place, and the echoing of the thunder from the surrounding hills added to the grimness of the scene. "One night," he writes, "when no such turmoil of the elements was astir, I distinctly heard a noise advancing up the steps. Snatching up a candle I went to meet it. Half-way down I was confronted by a company of rats, who stood there defying me until I hurled something at them, on which they scampered away as if astonished at the cruelty of the oppressor." But rats were not the only guests in this desolate abode; there were serpents, scorpions and centipedes, the two last-named of which would awaken him at night with the noise of their crawling over paper. All this sounds desolate enough under ordinary circumstances, yet it must be remembered that the sense of his bereavement still lay heavily on his mind, and that the contrast of his then lonely condition with the happy visions of family life in the East, which had been so rudely dispelled by the death of his young wife, must have added tenfold to the desolation that surrounded him. He rejoiced in the sweet breezes from the hills, in the views from his upper windows, and in the knowledge that he had at last resumed the subjects of his choice, but whilst he was in the act of walking to and fro on his roof and enjoying the air and sunlight; "the reflection," so he says, "how far short of my erewhile roseate hope my state was, often drove me indoors to my solitary work."

And this loneliness by no means tended to diminish as time went on, for he writes, referring to a later date: "The

loneliness of my life in this second visit to Syria was so great a contrast to what I had planned it should be, that oftentimes I pitied myself. There were no companions with whom to have converse, and I felt what disadvantage it was to have no friendly eye to comment on my painting, nor any other works of art to refresh me. I often felt, while enjoying my work to the full, how foolish were the axioms of those modern social reformers who would have it that the labour of an artist is one of continuous enjoyment. Had they seen me sometimes in the quiet hours when alone, they would have been encouraged in the condemnation of my efforts, as altogether proving the want of that artistic self-confidence they so much admire." He then refers to the difficulties that have to be encountered when an artist strives to make an original idea intelligible. The whole of this period was one of keen mental suffering, and his great work *The Shadow of Death* was an appropriate outcome of it.

After some months of steady work he had advanced the picture sufficiently to enable him to make a beginning upon the landscape seen through the two arched windows. This necessitated a stay at Nazareth, whence he could command a charming panorama of cultivated landscape and distant hills, part of which is exquisitely reproduced in his picture. After a brief visit to Cana of Galilee he returned to Jerusalem with all the materials necessary for his background.

Once more the old difficulties began. He had succeeded in procuring what seemed to be a suitable model (a Bethlehem man) for the figure of Christ, but, during the progress of the painting, the bronze shade of his skin after two days of intense sunshine on Hunt's roof became red, and later the chocolate colour of an Indian; with the result that the flesh-painting could not be continued until the model had

been protected from the sunlight for a month. Added to these troubles were others produced by the changeableness of the weather, and the sudden disappearances of the sun for long intervals, at moments when its full light was urgently needed. Such changes of the weather obliged Hunt on more than one occasion to obliterate portions of his picture and to begin all over again when conditions became suitable. Week after week passed and the same struggles continued; it appeared "that Nature was jealous and abhorred the imitation of herself"; to crown all the unhappy discovery was soon made that the model was too thin and insufficiently developed for his purpose. In due course, however, whilst wandering in the lanes of Bethlehem he was fortunate in meeting with the very man he needed—a man noble in form and of beautiful expression, whom he succeeded in persuading to sit for the figure of Christ. His appearance did not belie him, for he proved to be "the most truthful, honest and dignified servant" Hunt had ever met in Syria, and was an earnest member of the Greek Church. It was from him, so Hunt tells us, that he painted the head and modified the figure.

A letter written by Hunt to W. B. Scott on the 20th February, 1871, bears evidence of his difficulties. "As yet," he writes, "I have no confidence that I shall get my picture done. Much depends on the weather; lately it has been so wet and windy I have not been able to get out of doors to paint." And a letter of the 30th September, 1871, to the same friend, shows that the ordeal of the recent summer had brought about serious consequences: "This picture of mine treats me so severely that I am a miserable slave, with no time for anything but just the attempt to sustain life and strength enough to wrestle with my work, which plays the part of a tenacious foe. I have engaged

myself in a very difficult struggle, and I have been unwise in many ways in the battle. . . . I have no loving eyes to cheer me such as I hoped to have ever with me when I left England. . . . Do you know—not in a manner of speaking, but in sober earnestness—I thought in the middle of the summer it would be the death of me. I got but about four hours' sleep each day, and these were scarcely rest, for my feverish anxiety went on through the night, and I dreamed of nothing but newly-discovered faults—of paint drying before it could be blended, of wind blowing down my picture and breaking it, etc.—until my eyes sank so deep into my head, and I became green, and my body seemed such a heavy, stiff and unelastic corpse that I thought the next stage must be coffinward. And now that it is past, people tell me they thought me a doomed man."

It appears that a later model, Ezaak by name, had at one time been a notorious highway robber. Hunt writes of him in the same letter: "I did not know of his wild side at first. He has become very much attached to me, and when I want to find out-of-the-way places I take him with me on excursions at times. He rides like a Centaur, but with his knees up to the horse's shoulders, as all Arabs do; and as his old character is still accredited to him, we strike a wholesome dread into all the country wherever we go."

In a letter to Millais, dated the 12th October, 1871, he again refers to his troubles, and adds, "When I began my work I had very ambitious hopes about it, but (like Browning's man, who in infancy cried for the moon, and in old age was grateful for the crutch on which he hobbled out of the world) I should be glad now to find it done in any way. There are peculiar difficulties in the subject I have devoted my time to—such serious ones that, had I only foreseen them, I would have left the subject to some future painter;

but I tried to console myself by thinking that other pictures I have in mind to follow will go more easily and be a great deal better."

At moments when he was not engaged upon *The Shadow of Death* he sometimes employed his mind in working out a subject that had previously occurred to him—namely, that of the Flight into Egypt. And, with the object of securing materials for a suitable landscape, he had in February, 1870, made an expedition south-westwards from Jerusalem to Gaza, in company with a friend, Mr. Samuel Bergheim; and it was here that he found the water wheel and group of trees to be seen depicted in the background of his *Triumph of the Innocents*. There was a full moon, and he sat up by night until he had painted this scene; returning to the north when it was done, by way of the coast. It was during this journey that he was informed of an Englishman seriously ill at Jaffa; and he relates how, in March, whilst on his way to the latter's assistance accompanied by a doctor, he was suddenly held up by a mounted band of robbers armed with all kinds of weapons. The sheikh demanded whether he was without a guard, and he and the doctor replied that their soldiers had been too slow for them and had in consequence been left far behind, but that they themselves were well armed and fully prepared to defend themselves; whereupon the murderers drew aside and allowed the two to pass.

In the early months of 1871 Hunt himself fell seriously ill with a dangerous fever, and this and other delays deferred the maturing of his picture until the late autumn, when, in accordance with promises already given, it was shown to the Pasha and other dignitaries, including the Greek Patriarch. After they had all left the studio Hunt's attention was arrested by "an extraordinary hubbub coming from below." He demanded of Gabriel, his servant, what

all the noise denoted, and received in reply the following explanation :

" It is the little shopkeepers, masons, and the work-people of the neighbourhood, who, seeing the Pasha's party and the Patriarch's coming and going from the house, have knocked to know whether there is not something to see, adding that they would like to come up with the others. I have explained it is not for people like them, it is only to great personages that the picture is shown, but they are still waiting and blocking up the streets, so that the invited *effendis* can scarcely get to the door."

Hunt sent the man down with instructions that the people might see the picture if they would divide themselves into groups of twenty ; and, this having been agreed upon, the crowd was gradually admitted into the room. During the course of the inspection a mason, dusty and splashed with lime-wash, who had seen the picture, sent a message that he particularly desired an interview with Hunt. The interview was granted ; and, after expressing his great interest in the work, the man continued as follows : " We shall always remember it with thanks, but we want you to do us one more favour ; the lady here will not allow us to step over the cord to go up and touch the picture, although we promise not to do it any harm. Now, while you are here you can see us, and we beg permission to go and put our fingers on it."

Hunt explained that this would be impossible, and asked the man's reason for such a wish.

" Well," said the mason, " we want to feel what is the difference between the linen and the flesh, the sky and the shavings ; we have seen it with our eyes, and we want to feel it with our hands."

Hunt remained firm, and, after a reiteration of his

demand, the man shifted his ground and expressed a wish on behalf of all his friends that the picture should be turned round to show the back. This, again, was impossible, as the picture had with difficulty been arranged so as not to reflect the light from the window. Hunt explained that it was exactly similar to the back of a portable canvas, which he held up and showed him. But the request was repeated ; and, upon further refusal, the group assumed an air of dejection, until another speaker stepped forward and vouchsafed a full explanation.

" I think that I can convince you, O Moallim," said he, " why we ask this kindness ; we have been here twenty minutes looking at the front of the Messiah and the back of the Sit Miriam ; is it not natural that now we should wish to see the face of Sit Miriam and the back of the Christ? "

Hunt once more explained that there was nothing on the back ; but the people remained incredulous to the end.

It was noticed by Hunt that those of the Roman Catholic community refrained from coming to see the picture, and, upon enquiry as to the cause of this, he was informed that the papal dignitaries had denounced the depicting of the Virgin with face hidden as an indignity to her, in consequence of which they had forbidden their flock to see the painting. It is interesting to compare with this attitude of mind that of the extreme church party in England, when at a later date the picture was exhibited there. With the assurance which often accompanies narrowness of mind they denounced the work as blasphemous, refusing to believe, in spite of the testimony of St. Mark, that Christ could ever have demeaned Himself by a task so humble as that of a carpenter.

Not long after the incidents related the picture was sent to England, and was soon followed by Hunt himself, who

travelled via Trieste, Vienna and Paris ; which latter city had but lately passed through the ordeal of the Franco-German War and bore signs of devastation. His friend, Robert Martineau, had died in 1869, and in April, 1873, took place the death of Charles Collins, whose portrait he drew as he lay in his last sleep. When the picture reached London it was housed for a time in Millais' studio, Millais being away fishing in Scotland ; and after Millais' return other accommodation was found. Hunt spent a good many months in improving various details of his work, and in 1874 it was sold (together with the first study for the picture) to Messrs. Agnew and Sons for the ample sum of £11,000, the first £5,500 to be paid immediately, and the remainder at a later date. In one of his *Contemporary Review* articles Hunt says, "The Temple picture and *The Shadow of Death* gained larger prices than any English pictures had done before ; no pictures ever cost so much to their painters." The work was exhibited in London and Oxford, and later in the north of England, where, as was usual with Hunt's paintings, it received the warmest welcome. It gratified the painter to learn that the working-men of the north were particularly enthusiastic about the picture ; for, like Tennyson, he was always anxious that the poorer classes should gain inspiration from his work. In the particular instance of *The Shadow of Death* his desire that his representation of the lowliness of Christ's life should carry its message to those that shared that humility was all the stronger. The picture was next sent to Buckingham Palace, in accordance with the wishes of the Queen, and many years later Hunt made at her command a copy of the head of Christ, which was hung in the Chapel Royal under the title of *The Beloved*.

One or two words must be said as to the picture itself. Among the first impressions produced by it upon the

approaching spectator is that of the warm glow of bright sunlight, which, as it were, pulsates with life, bathing the picture in the full glory of the departing day. Then the eye feasts upon the exquisite greens and blues of the Virgin's dress, the rich bronze of the principal figure, the sweet landscape with its pale blue distant hills, and the bright red head-dress reposing on the floor near the right-hand corner of the picture, and by its significant colour adding to the tragedy of the scene. The shavings, with which the floor is strewn are not long in catching the attention, and a little observation will show that they are not represented in the manner employed by imitators of Pre-Raphaelitism who often depicted small objects as clear-cut when in real life their outlines merge indefinitely the one into the other, but that they are distinct only over the area nearest the spectator, becoming less defined as the floor recedes into the background. Hunt has been charged with excessive minuteness in the painting of these shavings, but a moment's observation of a similar scene in real life will show that the eye does actually see these objects precisely as Hunt has represented them, and that they are no more falsely depicted than are the tools in the foreground of Tintoretto's famous *Crucifixion* or the flowers in Leonardo's *Annunciation*. Other details that catch the attention are two pomegranates and a roll of the Law on the window ledge.

Christ is seen stretching his weary frame whilst he looks upwards in prayer. At this moment the sun, which has almost reached the horizon, floods the room with its rays, which, penetrating the circular-headed entrance, project the shadow of Christ upon the wall just below the tool-rack. The rack and the long tools, which hang vertically in the centre of the former, form the shape of a cross upon which the shadow with upraised arms appears to hang.

Meanwhile the Virgin, who has been examining the gifts of the Magi packed in an ivory box and kept for safety's sake in the workshop of her Son, a golden crown and a censer being visible at the top, has noticed the ominous shadow and turned her head towards it in sudden terror.

This large picture is one of the most impressive of all Hunt's works, and when the mind has detached itself from the tragic and dramatic significance of the scene the eye can share the painter's delight in the warmth of the Eastern sunshine and the wealth and glory of oriental colour.

It is interesting to have the opinion of a painter like Watts as to this picture; he writes in a letter to a friend: "I think the painter more than justified in illustrating the historical side of his subject, and there is something very touching in the words, 'He was subject to his parents.' I feel also that there is much religious poetry in the allusion to the dignity of labour, and charm in the idea conveyed of human love between Mother and Son. As to my own picture (*The Spirit of Christianity*), it is wholly different, and not to be placed in the same category in any way whatever."¹

¹ *The Life of G. F. Watts*, by M. E. Watts, Vol. I, Ch. VIII.



THE SHADOW OF DEATH

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XV

"THE TRIUMPH OF THE INNOCENTS"

1875 TO 1886

HUNT remained in England until November, 1875, and, during this brief sojourn at home, an important event had taken place in his engagement to Marion Edith Waugh, sister of his deceased wife, to whom he was married in the present year at Neufchâtel. Mrs. Craik, the novelist (*née* Dinah Maria Mulock), who had been an early friend of his¹ and after whom he was to name his daughter, accompanied the bride to the Continent; and, after the wedding had taken place, they spent a short time in Switzerland, the newly-married couple travelling thence to Verona and Venice, and on by ship to Alexandria and Jaffa, being joined on the way by Hunt's son. Several years of severe strain and difficulty were now before him, during which his wife, by her sympathy and constant helpfulness, played no small part in enabling him to struggle successfully against the misfortunes that now obstructed his path. In referring to this marriage, W. B. Scott says that it had "really been his salvation by the amiability and helpfulness of the noblest of women"—a tribute which has been endorsed by more than one of those who were acquainted with her.

Arrived at Jerusalem he went to inspect the house which had stood empty for nearly three years and in which he had

¹ He first met her during his student-days at the British Museum sitting by the side of her handsome brother, Tom Mulock, whilst the latter drew "with great earnestness, capacity and modesty." Hunt describes the brother (who died young) as a youth who could never be forgotten.

left his study for the *Triumph of the Innocents* and a good many painting materials. He tells us that the landlord had failed to keep the house in repair, with the result that "rain, moth and rust had devastated the place and made it uninhabitable." All the materials were seriously damaged, but by good fortune the study for his picture had altogether escaped harm. Arrangements had now to be made for a house with a large room suitable for a studio, and Hunt decided to build one for himself. During the progress of the work he painted his picture entitled *The Ship* in illustration of Tennyson's lines:

I hear the noise about thy keel ;
I hear the bell struck in the night ;
I see the cabin-window bright ;
I see the sailor at the wheel.¹

The idea for this had occurred to him during his voyage through the Mediterranean, when he had made the necessary sketches ; and, in painting it, he made use of linen purchased in the bazaar at Jerusalem. Alas, better had it been for him had the linen showed its untrustworthiness on this less important work, rather than on the great picture that was shortly to be undertaken ; unhappily it proved itself amply strong for the painting of *The Ship*, and thus he was persuaded to start *The Triumph of the Innocents* upon the same material.

The reason for this use of linen purchased locally can be given in a few words. Before leaving England he had packed his painting materials in three cases so that on the arrival of the ship they could without difficulty be transported from the coast of Palestine to Jerusalem on the backs

¹ *In Memoriam*, X.

of mules or by camel; all were perfectly secured and addressed, and instructions had been left for their dispatch. When he arrived at Jaffa he was astonished to find that no cases awaited him. Enquiries were sent to England but received only vague replies, with the result that he began to despair of ever gaining possession of the cases, and would have travelled to Alexandria or Naples in order to purchase new materials did not the rumours, then current, of an intended massacre of Christians in Palestine prevent his leaving his wife and son. Thus *The Ship* was painted on local linen, and a beginning of *The Triumph of the Innocents* made on similar material. Five months after his departure from England the news at last reached him that one enormous case, which no mule or camel could carry, awaited him on the quay at Jaffa; and when he arrived at the port he found inside it the three missing cases.

It is unnecessary to enter into unpleasant details, but let it suffice to say that the blame for this delay—a delay which brought with it disastrous consequences—rested upon Hunt's friend, the art-critic, F. G. Stephens, who, in a moment of groundless irritation, failed to carry out the other's simple request as to the dispatch of the materials. Writing some years later (5th January, 1880) to W. B. Scott, Hunt, still groaning beneath the difficulties that began at the date we have reached, says: "For four years this torment has been going on, wasting my life and health and powers, just when I believe they should be at their best, all through a stupid bit of temper on the part of a good friend."

Just before the receipt of news of the arrival of the case, Hunt paid a second visit to the region of Gaza, in order to procure further details of the landscape of Philistia for his background. He had already worked for some months at

The Triumph of the Innocents, and was therefore unwilling to sacrifice everything and to begin a second time on the English canvas. Had he realized the consequences of this decision he would have thought little of the sacrifice of a few months' labour.

In the meantime the building of his house was steadily progressing, and as soon as the studio was complete he took possession of it and continued to work at his picture until the rainy season set in, when such was the nature of the tiled roof, and such the character of the workmen, that water streamed into the room and collected in puddles all over the floor, so that his picture had to be protected by tarpaulins and work came to a standstill until the necessary steps were taken to render the chamber proof against the drenching rains.

Among the visitors to his studio, after these annoyances, were about a dozen Moslem ladies, wives of one of Hunt's neighbours, who were anxious to see the inside of the house and the work that was in progress there. Hunt showed them the study for his picture as well as the picture itself, and his report of the comments made by the eldest wife is too entertaining to be omitted. After he had related the story of the Flight into Egypt, she set about to count the babies and the larger figures, saying as she progressed, "Seventeen babies in the large picture, and several more in the small one, with the Sit Miriam, Al Issa Messiah and Mar Jusif. This is very well, but on the day of judgment what will you do?"

"Ah!" replied Hunt. "I can trust only in the mercy of the Beneficent; but why, pray, ask me that question?"

"Because," answered the lady, "the souls of these beings that you have made will be required of you, and what will you say then?"

" I hope," said Hunt, " that every one of them will be present to justify me."

With a look of bewilderment she turned to her party with the words, " Oh, if indeed you can satisfy God the Just with their souls, it will be well with you."

Among the newly-made friendships of this period was that of Lord (then Lieutenant) Kitchener, who was engaged in a survey of Palestine, and who saw much of Hunt during his sojourn at Jerusalem. Of Hunt's lesser works the present period saw the completion of the small but richly coloured landscape, entitled, *Nazareth, overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon*, exhibited in the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877.

The birth of a daughter took place in 1876, and in the following year, fearing an outbreak of violence on the part of the Moslems, whose feeling of bitterness towards Christians had of late been growing to a dangerous extent, Hunt decided to send his wife and the two children, with their nurse and tutor, to Jaffa, where they were safely housed in a Greek convent for the remainder of the sojourn in Palestine, while he continued to work at his picture, advancing some of the figures. By this time the inadequacy of the linen had revealed itself to an alarming extent. Irregularities had developed in the centre of the picture, which in certain lights completely distorted the forms depicted upon it. Attempt after attempt was made to find more suitable positions for the principal figures, and night after night was spent, candle in hand, testing the surface, but all in vain. The only hope that now remained was to return to England and trust that the irregularities might submit to the skill of a picture-liner.

The family left Palestine in the spring of 1878,¹ and Hunt describes the unpacking of his unfinished picture in

¹ W. B. Scott erroneously gives 1877 as the year.

England as "like the reappearance of an appalling ghost that had been laid for some time." The work was immediately taken to a restorer, who backed it with strong canvas. But the hope of thus straightening the defective linen proved a vain one, and expedient after expedient was resorted to without result; meanwhile week after week flew by, and with the ebb of time came anxiety and despair. "Weeks grew into months," Hunt writes, "and months into years—always promising to each new effort a success which never came. It was indeed an evil time; friends naturally wondered at my postponement of invitation to come to my studio, and asked as a joke whether I had not altogether given up painting." All that he was now able to exhibit was *The Ship*, which was hung in the Grosvenor Gallery in 1879.

Not long after his return to England we find him settled at 2 Warwick Gardens, Kensington, and toiling at his picture in a studio that formed part of a group of studios used by other painters. He fell seriously ill about this time with typhoid fever, contracted during a visit to Paris, and considered that had it not been for the skilful attention of his friend and doctor, Sir William Gull, he would have succumbed. Referring to this illness a year later in a letter to W. B. Scott, he speaks of it as a "terrible and doubtful struggle with the devil," which had brought him to the very portals of death; "indeed, almost, I may say, beyond these during my delirium."

On the last day of 1879 he sent for Scott (so the latter tells us) to come to his studio and see his unfinished work. Scott describes the artist's appearance as aged and anxious. It has already been said that, as is the case with strong characters who feel deeply, Hunt's nature was a reserved one. He rarely spoke of the things nearest his heart, a fact which

doubtless appeared odd to a temperament such as that of Scott, who writes, " I found him in a state of suspense and suppressed excitement, his temperament being one that showed no emotion in ordinary ; even when taken by surprise he would show no signs of such being the case. He is in fact one of the kind who seem to count twenty-five before replying to any unexpected interrogation."¹

In a letter to Scott dated the 5th January, 1880, Hunt relates an experience that took place during his almost despairing efforts to straighten the surface of his picture. So crushing was the ordeal through which he was now passing, when every fresh attempt meant loss of valuable time, and when his mind was filled with new conceptions which he longed to place on canvas—conceptions to which the present monotonous flight of years gave but faint hope of realization—that one is not surprised to find him firmly believing that some evil fate was continually working against him. The fact that one so habitually reticent as he should think fit to disclose these inner struggles is sufficient testimony to the strength of the impression produced upon his mind by year after year of horrors such as few painters have been called upon to face. The following account is characteristically described by Scott as " painfully interesting " ; Hunt was undoubtedly affected by the incident, the more so because none of his investigations could lead to the discovery of a material explanation.

Those were the days before the motor-lorry began its noisy operations, and Hunt took care to ascertain that there had been no earthquake-shock.

On Christmas Day, 1879, he was engaged in putting into practice a new plan for the repairing of his linen, and, the day being as dark as night, he was obliged to work from

¹ *Autobiography*, Ch. XIV.

eleven o'clock onwards with a lighted candle held in his hand with the palette. All the other studios of the group were unoccupied, the artists who made use of them being with their families and friends. Whilst he was groaning over the difficulties, a ray of light suddenly dawned upon his mind and he began to feel that there was hope. "I hung back," he writes, "to look at my picture. I felt assured that I should succeed. I said to myself half-aloud, 'I think I have beaten the devil,' and stepped down, when the whole building shook with a convulsion, seemingly immediately behind my easel, as if a great creature were shaking itself and running between me and the door. I called out, 'What is it?' but there was no answer, and the noise ceased. I then looked about; it was between half-past one and two, and perfectly like night, only darker. . . the fog hid everything. I went to the door, which was locked as I had left it, and I noticed that there was no sign of human or other creature about."¹ He returned to his work cheered by what he regarded as the tumult of the devil's departure. Whatever the event may have been, it proved of good omen, for though considerable time elapsed before the linen could be straightened, it *was* eventually straightened, and the picture now hangs at Liverpool in all its beauty.

Hunt describes in his book an odd occurrence which took place about this time on a visit of his to the house in Cheyne Walk in which *The Light of the World* was completed. His wife happened one day to meet the owner of this house, and expressed a wish to visit the studio of former days. It was dark when the visit took place, and the old house was then unoccupied. Ascending the steps, Hunt knocked at the door; the sound echoed through the empty passages,

¹ W. B. Scott's *Autobiography*, Ch. XIV.

but no one came to open to him. Further knocking at the fast-closed door was resorted to, and eventually the caretaker appeared from the opposite side of the street and explained that he had not expected the visitors so soon and could not open the door from the outside as he had no key with him; he would, however, climb the garden wall, enter the house by another way, and open the door from within. He disappeared; presently sounds were heard in the house, followed by the grating of the bolts of the entrance, which was at last opened, and there stood like an apparition the caretaker with a lantern in his left hand. The visitors looked startled at the strangeness of his appearance, and seeing this he explained that he had lit the old lantern in the absence of a suitable candlestick. He then led the way up the familiar staircase; and, arrived at the landing, the visitors turned into the erstwhile studio. The caretaker preceded them into the room; lantern in hand he then walked across it to the very spot where Hunt's model had stood during the painting of *The Light of the World*; and there he appropriately but quite innocently came to a standstill, the lantern shining by his side and dispersing the surrounding gloom.

In the summer of 1882 Ruskin came to Hunt's studio to see the still unfinished picture. He expressed the keenest enthusiasm about it, and believed it to be a masterpiece. Writing to Mrs. Severn soon after the event he says: "I had an entirely happy afternoon with Holman Hunt—entirely happy because, first, at his studio I had seen, approaching completion, out and out the grandest picture he has ever done, which will restore him at once, when it is seen, to his former sacred throne. It is a *Flight into Egypt*, but treated with an originality, power, and artistic quality of design, hitherto unapproached by him. Of course my

feeling this made *him* very happy, and as Millais says the same, we're pretty sure, the two of us, to be right! Then we drove out to his house at Fulham. Such Eastern carpets—such metal work! Such sixteenth-century caskets and chests—such sweet order in putting together—for comfort and use—and *three* Luca della Robbias on the walls!—with lovely green garden outside, and a small cherry tree in it before the window, looking like twenty coral necklaces with their strings broken, falling into a shower.”¹

Hunt had but lately established himself and family at Draycott Lodge, Fulham, where, had it not been for the anxieties caused by his picture, he would have been more happily placed than he had been at any previous date. A restorer had been at work upon his picture, but the linen soon again gave way, and eight more months of toil were wasted, with the result that Hunt began to be threatened with financial difficulties. Friends, however, came forward with assistance, and once more he was able to continue the strife against heart-breaking misfortunes. He now decided to abandon the picture which had cost him so many years of bitter toil, and to begin the same subject on fresh canvas. Like one who, having lost his way, is obliged to retrace the arduous track by which he has come, Hunt toiled on feverishly and unceasingly with his repetition of former work, until insomnia and ill-health compelled him to lay down his brush and to seek refreshment in Switzerland. He returned with strength sufficiently renewed, and worked without intermission until the picture was completed. In 1885 it was exhibited in the Gallery of the Fine Arts Society, Bond Street, but the strain of past years had left its mark upon the painter, whose health was temporarily shattered. Referring in a letter to Scott to his want of

¹ Cook's *Life of Ruskin*, Vol. II, Ch. XXVI.

training in the appreciation of music he rightly says, "It seems to me that I have been assailed more than most men, in attempts to work, by obstructing demons, so that it has been impossible to listen duly to angels' lessons."

Whilst he was engaged upon less important work he consulted with his restorer as to the possibility of cutting out and replacing the warped linen in the centre of the original picture; and it was eventually decided that this might be attempted with fair hope of success if the square of cloth to be inserted were cut an inch or so longer than the gap to be filled, the edges, both of it and of the old linen to which it was to be attached, unravelled, and the new and the old materials woven together and laid on a strong backing. The plan proved entirely successful, and, before long, Hunt had the satisfaction of seeing completed the work that had led him along so many devious ways, after an interval of more than ten years since it was begun at Jerusalem. It was then sold to the Walker Art Gallery at Liverpool for 3,500 guineas.

As has been seen, Ruskin's opinion of this great work was exceedingly high. In his lecture delivered on the 9th March, 1883, and printed in *The Art of England* he pronounced it to be "the greatest religious picture of our time," and spoke of Hunt's "better than magical power of giving effects of intense light." "The passion of his subject," Ruskin continues, "has developed in him a swift grace of invention which for my own part I never recognized in his design until now. I can say with deliberation that none even of the most animated groups and processions of children which constitute the loveliest sculpture of the Robbias and Donatello, can more than rival the freedom and felicity of motion, or the subtlety of harmonious line, in the happy wreath of these angel children."

The group, led by Joseph, is in the region of Gaza on its way to the Egyptian frontier ; and the landscape is that of early spring with newly fallen snow cresting the desolate ridge of mountains seen through the darkness of night. The spirits of the massacred children have joined the travellers and are trooping along with them, garlanded as was the custom with ancient sacrifices, and some of them carrying branches of blossoming trees. A supernatural light shines upon them and illuminates the radiant faces of the rejoicing children. The infant spirits are divided into three groups, first the leading group bathed in heavenly light with their eyes filled with joy in the knowledge of their new life ; secondly a large middle group in a stage of spiritual transition, of whom the leading infant gazes down at the rent in its garment, bewildered that its body bears no trace of the mortal wound ; and lastly a group of three (I refer to the original version) floating behind the ass, asleep and in attitudes of pain ; these latter bear witness to suffering recently undergone, whilst those that precede carry the mind gradually forward to the new life that has triumphed over death. The whole transition from the agony of martyrdom to the joy of a higher state of existence is in itself a stroke of consummate genius. Of the principal figures the infant Christ is the only one who sees the vision of the children ; he points back to them with some ears of corn held in his hand, endeavouring to attract the attention of his mother. Joseph is leading the ass quickly forward on the brink of a narrow stream of water that descends from the left of the group of trees ; he is turning his head with alarm towards the glow of signal fires and some dogs which are piercing the night air with their barking. So much for the main action of the scene.

Next we have some elaborate symbolism. As there are



THE TRIUMPH OF THE INNOCENTS
(Begun at Jerusalem)

By permission of the Corporation of Liverpool

two systems of lighting in the picture—the natural and the supernatural—so there exist two kinds of water beneath the feet of the figures—the natural stream, in the first place, into which Joseph is stepping, and, in addition, a stream of conventional water which is intended to symbolize, to use the painter's own words, "the spiritual, eternal stream, provided in exchange for the life that perisheth." This water, which bears with it the spirits of the children, is easily distinguishable from that of the natural stream by the solidity of its form. From it rise globules of various sizes, intended as symbols of the Jewish belief in the millennium following upon the coming of the New Messiah, a close examination of the largest of which discloses faint miniature scenes of the Tree of Life, the Dream of Jacob and the Adoration of God in Heaven.

One does not incline to criticism of such a supreme work of art as this greatest of Hunt's pictures, but the question that arises is whether the elaboration of the symbolism of the water and the globules does not too much interfere with the beauty and simplicity of the scene as a whole. The mind reverts to Giotto's superb picture of the Flight into Egypt on the walls of the Arena Chapel at Padua—a magical design characterized by rigid simplicity—and one regrets that Hunt did not allow his children to proceed without the symbolical stream beneath their feet and without the ascending globules, so that the mind might be allowed to turn its full attention upon the groups of baby figures so exquisitely painted, so harmoniously arranged in the radiance of celestial light. Another point in which the painter has been unhappy is in the type chosen for the Virgin. But when these details have been laid aside, the fact remains that no religious picture ever painted by English hand can rival either in power of invention, originality of

thought, or skill in design, this modern *Flight into Egypt* with its baby apparitions; and that no modern painter whatever approaches in his work nearer to the realm occupied by the great Italian masters than does Holman Hunt in this masterpiece of his.

XVI

WORK UNDER HAPPIER CIRCUMSTANCES

1886 TO 1899

PUBLIC recognition on a large scale now took the place of the neglect that had resulted from his long absences from England, during which periods, on account of his failure to exhibit, it had actually been rumoured that he was no longer alive. In 1886 the Fine Art Society applied to him to exhibit all his available works in their gallery in Bond Street, and in collecting these pictures Hunt discovered that two of them had sustained damage—the *Rienzi* on account of careless varnishing on the part of a previous possessor, and *The Light of the World* through having been for the past ten years placed above hot-air pipes, which had blistered parts of the surface to a serious extent. He succeeded in restoring both to their original condition, and, had it not been for the exhibition, the damage to *The Light of the World* might not have been discovered until too late, and a priceless work would have been lost to the country. People flocked to see his collected pictures, and at the close the number of visitors to the gallery exceeded that recorded of any other single painter's exhibition.

Hunt's next piece of original work, after *The Triumph of the Innocents*, was a design of *Christ among the Doctors in the Temple* to be adapted in mosaic in the chapel of Clifton College ; and about five years later this was finished as a water-colour drawing. He had also written a series of papers on Pre-Raphaelitism, which appeared in the

Contemporary Review in 1886 (Vol. xlix), and to which reference has been made in an earlier chapter.

Mention has been made above of the public neglect which he underwent as a result of his long absences abroad, and to this there should be added one other cause of his unpopularity during the years with which we have been dealing. A number of well-known artists made a practice of reproducing the same type of picture year after year, and by this means got themselves rapidly known by the public and established a steady and constant sale of their works. Hunt was continually being told by picture-dealers that if he would paint a picture similar in character to such and such a work of his that had already been sold they would promise to buy it. But it is hardly necessary to say that Hunt was the last painter who was likely to allow himself to be persuaded to paint with a view to sales. In his devotion to his art he had marked out for himself a definite mission, and, far from becoming stereotyped, his works were for ever changing, so that by the time the public had grown accustomed to one idea an entirely fresh and original set of ideas would come from his brush. The result was that it took years for him to gain full recognition, whereas such painters as Alma-Tadema, by continually repeating similar ideas, made sure of a steady sale of their works and kept their names before the public eye.

A few words must now be said about some of the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which had long ceased to exist in the original application of the name, although, through its influence, many other painters had devoted themselves to the careful representation of natural scenery with varying degrees of success, and their works also came to be regarded as Pre-Raphaelite.

In 1857, Millais' departure from Pre-Raphaelite ideals

had begun seriously to show itself in carelessness of handling and in technical errors¹—defects which denoted a slackening of artistic enthusiasm, and were the early heralds of his so-called “pot-boilers” of later years. What was later spoken of as the increase of breadth in his style was in reality a lessening of labour by the slurring over of detail. There had been innumerable disagreements of a friendly nature between him and Hunt, in which Millais asserted that a painter must work not in pursuit of his own ideal of art but to supply the popular demand; if he did not paint for the passing fashion of the day he would be the loser both in money and in honours; and what was the use to him of recognition long after his death. “For my part,” said he, “I paint what there is a demand for. There is a fashion going now for little girls in mob caps. Well, I satisfy it while it continues; but immediately the demand shows signs of flagging, I am ready to take to some other fashion of the last century. . . .” And later—“Why, I’ve just sold a picture done in two weeks which will pay the expenses of all my family, my shooting and fishing too, for our whole time in Scotland.”² Millais had his reward, for in the course of his career he secured wealth and popularity; a baronetcy was conferred upon him in 1885, and in 1896 he was elected President of the Royal Academy. He died in the same year.

The truest commentary on his life and work is contained in some words of his own spoken at the exhibition of his collected works at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1886. In examining his early pictures, just before the exhibition, he said to F. G. Stephens, who happened to be present, “Really I did not paint so badly in those days, old man!” and

¹ See Ruskin's *Academy Notes* for 1857.

² Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism*, Vol. II, Ch. xiii.

Stephens remarks in a reminiscence, "I never saw him more deeply moved anent his own work than on this occasion."¹ One day, after the exhibition had begun, Lady Constance Leslie was ascending the stairs of the gallery when she encountered Millais, with bowed head, just leaving the exhibition. She spoke to him, and when he raised his head she saw tears in his eyes. "Ah, dear Lady Constance," said he, "you see me unmanned. Well, I'm not ashamed of avowing that in looking at my earliest pictures I have been overcome with chagrin that I so far failed in my maturity to fulfil the full forecast of my youth."²

It has been shown that Rossetti had never understood the real spirit of Pre-Raphaelitism. He severed his friendship with Hunt, and later spread abroad his interpretation of Pre-Raphaelitism as "the mere affectation of a parcel of boys." But, to do him justice, some words of his written in a letter dated the 7th November, 1868, to Ernest Chesneau, apropos of a statement of the latter in his book on English art, must be quoted. In this letter Rossetti wholly disclaims any right to be called the leader of the P.R.B. He continues (in French with the English idiom): "Quand je trouve un peintre si absolument original que l'est Holman Hunt décrit comme étant mon 'disciple,' il m'est impossible de ne pas me sentir humilié en face de la vérité, et de ne pas vous assurer du contraire avec le plus grand empressement."³ This statement hardly agrees with his previous attitude as given in an earlier chapter, but it must be remembered that Rossetti, being a man of moods, allowed his opinions to be dictated by momentary caprice. The latter part of his career both as painter and as poet was characterized by

¹ *Life of J. E. Millais*, by his son, Vol. II, Ch. xvii.

² Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism*, Vol. II, Ch. xiv.

³ *Études sur le Dix-neuvième Siècle*, by Edouard Rod.

pre-occupation with one type of sensuous subject—the very reverse of all that Pre-Raphaelitism stood for. The change which took place in him, and which resulted in the altered character of his painting, is aptly expressed by W. B. Scott, who says, “His curious materialistic piety disappeared, burst like a soap-bubble, and the superficial prismatic colours vanished into air. The early views of self-culture and self-sacrifice we have noticed underwent a similar *bouleversement*.”

After Rossetti's death on Easter Day, 1882, various causes conspired to perpetuate the theory of his Pre-Raphaelite leadership, and even to-day those who have made no particular study of the matter have been greatly misled. Among the factors that led to the misconception are a few words of Ruskin spoken in ignorance of the true relationship of Rossetti to Hunt; some careless statements by F. G. Stephens and William Rossetti, the latter of whom, however, in his *Memoir* of D. G. Rossetti, repudiates the notion that his brother originated the reform movement; some rash boasting of D. G. Rossetti himself; and sundry other books and articles on the subject, of which the biography of Rossetti by J. Knight, (who, incidentally, upon discovering the true facts of the case declared that had he known them in time he would never have written as he had done,) gives a totally false impression of Rossetti's relationship to the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Even in Sir Edward T. Cook's handbook to the National Gallery it is stated that Rossetti was “the head of the Pre-Raphaelite movement in English painting.” But the truth is now known to all who look into the facts, and if Rossetti's own words just quoted are not sufficient evidence, his paintings, if compared with those of Hunt and Millais, will always give their silent testimony.

The spirit of discord became rampant among the small group of friends who had in early days associated themselves together under the designation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Woolner, after much friendly intercourse with Hunt, abruptly and permanently terminated his friendship with him because he expressed doubts as to the authenticity of some of the much treasured pictures in his (Woolner's) collection, and Stephens, whose doings with regard to Hunt's boxes have already been alluded to, had of course also broken with him. Out of the little band of men who, actuated by the keenest enthusiasm, had joined their interests together nearly forty years before, Hunt was the only one who still remained faithful to his resolve. He had not swerved a hair's breadth from the pursuit of the ideal of his youth, nor had he lost any of the fervour of early enthusiasm.

To return to the main events of his life, in 1887 he delivered an address at the unveiling of the fountain erected on the Embankment at Chelsea to the memory of Rossetti; and, in view of Rossetti's former treatment of himself, his liberal praise of him on this occasion is one of the strongest testimonies to the extreme generosity of Hunt's nature. Among his lesser paintings of this period may be named *The Bride of Bethlehem*, *Amaryllis*, (both exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery, in 1885 and 1887 respectively,) and *Sorrow*, painted in 1889; all of which were undertaken with the idea of giving "varying types of womanhood with unaffected innocence of sentiment." And in 1886 he had painted a delightful portrait of the younger of his sons under the title of *The Tracer*. In 1887 he began an oil painting of *The Lady of Shalott*, the design of which has already been referred to in connection with the illustrated volume of Tennyson's poems, but before it was

brought to completion he abandoned it temporarily in favour of *May Morning on Magdalen Tower*, and went to Oxford to secure the necessary material. He attended the 1888 May morning ceremony on the roof of the tower, made observations and sketches, and for several weeks during the progress of the picture ascended with his canvas to the roof at about four o'clock in the morning, watching the sun rise and observing the accompanying cloud-effects.

Writing on the 10th June, 1888 (4 King Edward Street, Oxford) to Edward Clodd (who had first met him eight years previously, and as a youth of sixteen had by an odd coincidence been in the habit of buying fruit from Hunt's first sitter, Old Hannah the Jewess), Hunt refers to his picture and touches upon his ill-health, which was now causing him considerable trouble. In 1883 his ailment had been pronounced to be spasmodic asthma occasioned by hard work and incessant long-continued anxiety in connection with *The Triumph of the Innocents*, a complaint which was never cured. He says in writing to Clodd: "I feel very strongly the importance of making use of all the opportunities left me by my ailment to get over my much affected fortunes—and this subject at Magdalen I have set myself to seems to me an important one for me to have painted next year, when, as I calculate, my exasperating piece will be a picture of the Lady of Shalott. . . . It is hard work to get up at a quarter to four and wind my way up the narrow and steep stairs of the tower, and paint till half-past eleven or twelve without regular breakfast, but I have got a deal of my scene done and soon I shall begin on the figures."¹

And on the 31st December of the same year we find him still at Oxford, this time at 25 Holywell Street. In a letter of this date he writes to Clodd: "I am kept here with my

¹ *Memories*, by Edward Clodd.

picture, but the people are most pleasant and kind, and the dons at Magdalen help me to the utmost. In a week I may, perhaps, be beginning to think of moving, and when I come home I shall feel that part of the work which of necessity has been trying has been overcome, and I shall enjoy the delights of home not without a sense that I have earned them.”¹

There is some incongruity in this association of Hunt with Edward Clodd, but although totally without artistic sense and with an outlook upon life the very reverse of that of the painter, Clodd became a much valued friend of the family, and his intimate acquaintance with business affairs made him useful withal. Though an avowed atheist he was the kindest-hearted of men—the most Christian-hearted so Hunt used playfully to tell him—and these qualities, joined to his extensive knowledge of literature and his genial companionship, greatly endeared him to the painter.

Leaving Oxford early in 1889 Hunt bade farewell for the last time to his old friend Mrs. Combe (her husband had already died) for whom he had always entertained the profoundest admiration and respect, and of whose self-sacrificing attentions to the poor of Oxford he spoke with great warmth of feeling. In this last meeting she assured him that she had made provision for erecting a small chapel expressly for the permanent hanging of *The Light of the World*. The news of her death reached him in London soon after the completion and exhibition of the Magdalen Tower picture in 1891, and in 1894 her wishes were carried out. Through her bequest of £3,000 the organ in the south transept of Keble College Chapel was raised considerably above the level of the floor, and the space beneath it was turned into a side-chapel, separated from the main chapel by a stone-screen. Here *The Light of the World*

¹ *Memories*, by Edward Clodd,

found its permanent resting place, and here it can now be seen for a small payment, in exchange for which the visitor receives a printed copy of Ruskin's famous description of the picture. Perhaps one might venture to suggest that visitors should be allowed to see this noble painting unaccompanied by an attendant; without such freedom it is impossible either to grasp the full significance of the work, or to examine it in the light of Ruskin's notes supplied for that very purpose.

When *May Morning* appeared before the public there were some who raised objections to the introduction of the Parsee among the choristers, but Hunt wished to supply as much information as he could about the old custom connected with Magdalen tower, and the Parsee is introduced with very good reason as connecting the ceremony with Pagan practices of ancient times, to which it owes its origin. Most of the figures of the boys were painted from the sons or grandsons of well-known men, and interest is added to the group by the fact that the one immediately in front of the Parsee, with his music laid on his college cap, was taken from Hunt's younger son. The surplices, with their deep rounded folds like the mouldings of an early gothic arch, are in themselves a masterpiece of drapery painting, and the flowers strewn upon the leads of the roof and garlanded round the necks of the boys are exquisite in their bright spring colours. Shining upon the faces of the group is the full glory of the rising sun, a glory in which from early days the painter delighted. And in the background stretches a sky mottled with pink cirrus.

Meanwhile the lure of the East was acting powerfully upon the painter; and, having dismissed this piece of work, he began to make preparations for his fourth and last distant tour. A change has taken place in him since those

happy early years in Palestine when youthful vigour made light of hardship and danger. He is now well beyond his sixty-fifth birthday; his life up to this point, with all its joys and triumphs, has been a severe strife against many kinds of hindrances which have left their mark upon him; and the asthmatic affection already mentioned has played its part in hastening his apparent age. There exists a photograph of him, taken at about this time, in which he kneels before his easel, gun beneath his arm, and dressed in the costume which he wore when he painted *The Scapegoat*; the same costume, but the man greatly aged since the days when he sat by the Dead Sea. But, except for the asthma, he is still healthy; handsome, indeed, with flowing beard and eyes which tell of rare gentleness.

The departure of himself and his wife took place in the autumn of 1892; and, after a happy and highly interesting tour in Italy and Greece, they embarked at Naples for Alexandria, whence they journeyed on to Cairo; "which I found," writes Hunt, "after an absence of thirty-nine years, so changed that in the morning, on sallying forth into the Usbequieh, I should have been unable to guess that it was part of the same Cairo that I had known." Next came a trip up the Nile to Philæ, and at the end of March, 1893, the travellers set out for Jaffa and Jerusalem. This last glimpse of Jerusalem was fraught with interest both for himself and for his wife, but the place had changed greatly since the early days. He tells us that when first he approached the city in 1854 there was not a house to be seen outside its walls, but that now upon the whole surrounding landscape had sprung up "stone houses and cabins of every variety of ugliness, villas with verandah blinds and chimney pots, sheds of corrugated iron and factory chimneys. All the dear old windmills had disappeared or were in ruins,

and it was with difficulty that we could recognize our own house." How many old associations must have poured in upon Hunt's mind as he entered once more the abode of former days and allowed his thoughts to wander back over the gap of fifteen years, since, with mind tormented with anxiety, he had left that house hoping almost against hope to repair his faulty canvas in England!

There was an event to which his interest was now attracted, and that was the famous Greek ceremony of the Miracle of the Holy Fire, with every detail of which repeated attendances in the past had made him familiar. Jerusalem was being modernized beyond recognition; already the ceremony was beginning to lose some of its ancient characteristics, and Hunt foresaw that before long much of its picturesqueness would wholly disappear; he rightly felt that he was the only living artist who could depict the scene as it had appeared for centuries; so when the Greek Easter arrived he secured a place in the gallery of the Church of the Sepulchre, and, in preparation for his picture, drew "rapid mementoes of the moving mass" to add to a collection of sketches that he had made on previous occasions. Having brought together the necessary material he proceeded with his great work until the time came for his departure from Palestine. "In the end," he writes, "we packed up such furniture as moth and thieves had kindly left us in our house, and abandoned it and Syria for ever."¹ One imagines a sigh as of regret behind these words of his, as though in writing them he felt how limited had been his achievements as compared with all that he had hoped to do when, in the fervour of young enthusiasm, he

¹ Visitors to Palestine will find by the side of the road leading from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and in view of the Dead Sea and the Mountains of Moab, a stone seat placed there to the memory of Holman Hunt by his wife, and bearing an inscription to that effect.

sacrificed so much at home in order to pursue his ideal subjects in the East. No painter has experienced the joy of fulfilled ambitions, but in looking back upon Hunt's work in Palestine—to the time when he first left his native shores on completing *The Awakened Conscience*—we, who know his hindrances, cannot but regard *The Scapegoat*, *The Finding of Christ*, *The Shadow of Death*, and *The Triumph of the Innocents* as lasting monuments—sincere, profound in thought, and among the great achievements of English art. In viewing for the last time the walls of Jerusalem he must have felt that the days of his greatest activities were drawing to an end; and truly but little time now remained for work—for the sunlight in which he gloried and the sweet beauty of earth and heaven were in a few years to fade from his darkening sight.

The period consequent upon his return to England in 1893 was saddened by the deaths of friends. Madox Brown, whose genius had received scant acknowledgment from the country during his lifetime, and whom financial harassments pursued to the end, died in the autumn of 1893. "I attended his funeral at Finchley Cemetery," says Hunt, "and left feeling profoundly how his death would be to me a never ending loss." Lord Leighton passed away early in 1896, and his place as President of the Royal Academy was taken by Millais, to whom Hunt wrote reminding him of Lear's pun of years ago: "Did you ever hear of Lear's pun, which would be more appropriate now? It was that the Millaisnium of Art had come. You have gone a letter higher—from P.R.B. to P.R.A." He died in the August of the same year, and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, Hunt being among the pall-bearers. Tennyson, also, was no longer living, his death having taken place in the autumn that Hunt left England for his last visit to the East.

Settled once more at his home in Fulham—that delightful house which had given Ruskin so much pleasure eleven years previously, and which Alice Meynell, visiting it in 1893, describes¹ as “walled in from the multitudinous streets, and concentrating all the remaining sweetness of the region in its wild field and delicate lawn,” with its large studio hung round with relics of his travels, and its long drawing-room beautified with oriental rugs, Damascus lamps, della Robbia Madonnas and Childs, a much treasured Bellini, and innumerable gleanings from Eastern travel—he devoted his energies to *The Miracle of Sacred Fire* and the still unfinished *The Lady of Shalott*. Concurrently with this painting he had set himself to write an exhaustive account of the rise and progress of the Pre-Raphaelite movement; and this was gradually built up, chapter upon chapter, until its publication twelve years later in 1905. In his *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* he has rescued the reform movement from the dense fog of erroneous interpretation that had risen round about it. But not only has he done noble service to the cause of Pre-Raphaelitism in this authoritative and impartial account; he has given to the world through its pages an autobiography of absorbing interest. The book is dedicated to his wife “as one of my insufficient tributes to her whose constant virtues ever exalt my understanding of the nature and influence of womanhood.”

We will now pass silently through the years that saw the gradual maturing and completion of his last great picture—years of quiet work and well-earned contentment. Many of his old friends had died, but among those that still remained was Ruskin, greatly aged and by long years of mental disorder bereft of all the splendid eloquence of former years.

¹ In the Christmas number of the *Art Journal* for 1893.

Hunt, on the last of several visits to him at Brantwood, found there but a ghost of the old Ruskin whom he had accompanied about the galleries and churches of Venice in happier days; and there, in the garden above the shores of Coniston, the two were photographed together. In recalling what Ruskin had said in Venice as to the interest that would attach to such a photograph taken then, one feels that though the earlier opportunity was missed the later picture of these two famous men, singularly alive as it is, makes ample amends for the lack of the other. The aged prophet had now thrown his last thunderbolt and his strength was exhausted; but in the earlier visits of Hunt to Brantwood the two had been able to enjoy much lively and friendly intercourse. Mr. Arthur Severn, moreover, and his wife (the Joanna of *Praeterita*) and children always gave Hunt a happy welcome. Tennis frequently supplied the out-of-door recreation, and, though Ruskin did not play, Hunt entered with vigour into the game. Men of genius cannot be expected to gain proficiency in all the pursuits of lesser mortals, and Hunt, be it whispered, was never a master of the gentle art of tennis—indeed, I have it on good authority that his mode of play was calculated rather to entertain and amuse than to forward the cause of his partner to any great extent; but he enjoyed the game, none the less, and, despite the oft-times suppressed laughter of the younger members of the Severn family, no misgivings, happily, came to dull his ardour.

He was blessed with much happiness in his wife and home; indeed, the only disturbing element that now from time to time came into his life was the old asthmatic trouble which had first appeared during his struggles with *The Triumph of the Innocents*, and which the London winters did not tend to improve. In a letter to Edward Clodd, dated



HOLMAN HUNT AND RUSKIN AT BRANTWOOD

Facing p. 210

the 11th January, 1898, he says, "I have been shut up in my bedroom for the last eight days with an attack of bronchial asthma, which came upon me very suddenly. I am not yet released, but I am able to write a few lines to a good friend."

The Miracle of Sacred Fire, a labour of extraordinary magnitude and complexity every touch of which shows the power which the painter still retained, had now, with its rich frame designed and modelled by Hunt himself, reached its final stage, and was in the following year (1899) exhibited at the New Gallery. After being lent for a time to Liverpool, it was retained by the painter as being of a subject whose importance only a few would understand. Referring to it he writes, "Whether the celebration is regarded with shame by the advocates of unflinching truth, or with toleration as suitable to the ignorance of the barbaric pilgrims for whom it is retained, or with adoration by those who believe the fire to be miraculous, it has been from early centuries regarded as of singular importance. It echoes in many respects the mad excitement of the Asiatic mob in the temple of Ephesus."

No adequate representation existed of this ceremony—the most extraordinary ceremony the world has ever known—and it was natural that Hunt should wish to place it on record for all time, more particularly in view of the fact that future generations would not be able to see it as it appeared in his day. The spectacle of thousands of raving, so-called Christian, fanatics, under the guardianship of Mohammedan troops striving their utmost to prevent them from trampling and cutting each other to pieces, speaks volumes as to the character of the Eastern Church during the many centuries of the existence of the rite. And the astonishing nature of the proceedings becomes the more apparent when it is

realized that, by the end of the ceremony, the most sacred church in the world—the church which is built upon or near the very spot where Christ was buried—frequently became a scene of devastation and slaughter, in which the dead lay piled up in hundreds. In recording what had taken place at the Easter Eve ceremony shortly before Hunt's first sight of it, A. W. Kinglake tells us that, in the mad struggle which followed the appearance of the holy fire, close upon two hundred people were killed. And the record of Curzon, who witnessed the spectacle but twenty years previously (the 3rd May, 1834), contains evidence of the same kind. An earlier writer describes the church as "crowded with a numerous and distracted mob, making a hideous clamour very unfit for that sacred place, and better becoming Bacchanals than Christians;" and Curzon, in his account, tells us that the moment the fire appeared "a ferocious battle commenced" which soon turned the church into a shambles. In progressing through the building when the fight had ended he was obliged to walk over heap upon heap of corpses. "I saw full four hundred wretched people, dead and living heaped promiscuously one upon the other, in some places five feet high," he records. Ibrahim Pasha was then present with his suite, several of whom lost their lives in the fray, and himself fainted more than once, and would doubtless have perished had not his attendants cut a way for him with their swords through the dense mass of frantic pilgrims. After the appearance of the fire the mob surged and raged like a storm-tossed ocean, and the stifling heat and smoke, added to the hideous uproar of fighting Christians, constituted a scene as nearly resembling the inferno as it is possible to resemble it in this world.

"When the bodies were removed," says Curzon, "many

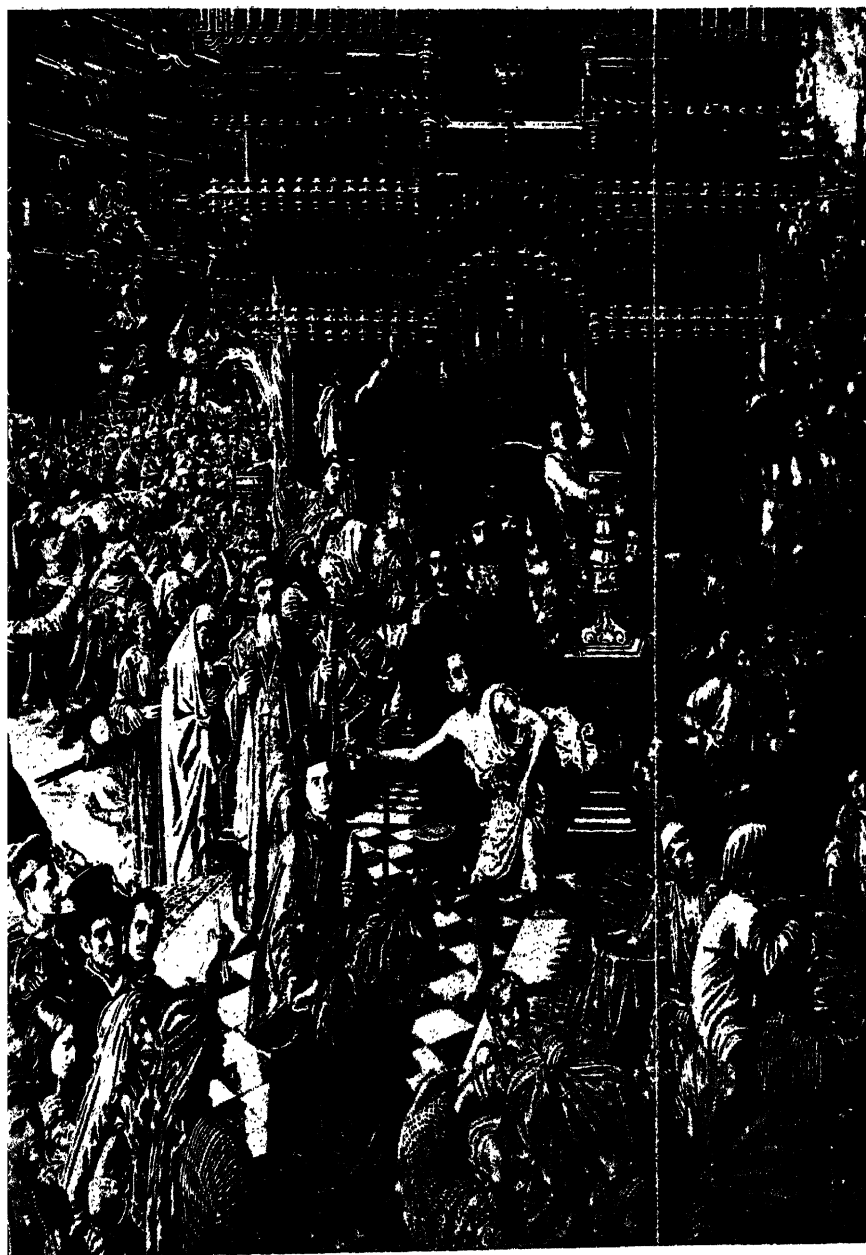
were discovered standing upright quite dead, and near the church door one of the soldiers was found thus standing, with his musket shouldered, among the bodies which reached nearly as high as his head. The whole court before the church was covered with bodies, laid in rows by the Pasha's orders, so that their friends might find them and carry them away. As we walked home we saw numbers of people carried out, some dead, some wounded and in a dying state, for they had fought with their heavy silver inkstands and daggers." In such a manner did the Eastern Church think fit to celebrate Easter Eve upon the site of the sepulchre from which Christ rose from the dead.

The painter has chosen that moment in the ceremony when the young priest, having taken the fire which has already been thrust out of an aperture in the shrine by the Patriarch, is proceeding to make his way through the crowd, guarded and carried by strong men, to the Jaffa gate of the City, whence a horseman will take the flame (sheltered in a lantern) and gallop off to Bethlehem with it, and whence it will next be carried to Jaffa, where it will be shipped for Odessa for distribution among the altars of the churches throughout Russia. Within the Church of the Sepulchre the crowd has provided itself with candles, and, the moment the flame becomes accessible, it will spread from hand to hand, will be hoisted up to the wealthy devotees that occupy the balconies, and soon the whole church will be ablaze with thousands of lights. Meanwhile the excitement of the mob is reaching a pitch of frenzy, and dense smoke will collect and form a canopy above the masses of Christian combatants all struggling amid suffocating heat. At the end of the ceremony it is the custom for each pilgrim to kiss his neighbour, blow out his candle and wrap it up for final use at his burial, and the moment of greatest danger usually came

when the mob attempted to fight its way out of the single exit of the building in order to escape the terrible heat and smoke, and to carry lighted candles to the streets and houses of Jerusalem.

But Hunt depicts the scene before the worst of the uproar has begun. The priest who carries the flame can be seen to the right of the shrine in the midst of his stalwart guardians; unlighted candles are visible in the hands of many; and scenes from the life of Christ are being enacted in various parts of the building. Thus, against the left-hand portion of the shrine a man stands with arms upraised personifying Christ crucified; to his right the Dead Christ is personified; and, above the dead Christ, as well as against the wall on the extreme right of the picture, a man with upraised arms can be seen enacting the Resurrection. High up on the shrine some of the tall candles droop with the heat. The Pasha, the Bim Pasha, Patriarchs, Bishops, Priests and other notabilities are visible between the shrine and the nearest figures.

In the year in which Hunt made his memoranda of the scene a fight broke out just before the appearance of the sacred fire, and this he has recorded in his dramatic work. The Mohammedan guards can be seen, towards the right of the picture, in the act of seizing the Christian combatants, foremost of whom is a young Bethlehemite who turns back his head in the endeavour to pacify his troubled women-folk, and in the centre is a boy in tattered garments fleeing from the Turkish peace-makers. A seething mass pours about the tall, ornate shrine which encloses the Tomb, each individual member of which is carefully studied, and painted with the detail of a portrait. The general effect of the flood of brightly coloured garments is that of a mosaic inlaid with precious stones. And not only are the people



THE MIRACLE OF SACRED FIRE

exquisitely rendered; the grouping and the actions are handled with extraordinary mastery and dramatic force.

In conversation with his family the painter expressed a wish that should the question of its sale arise at any time after his death the picture should go either to America or to one of the Colonies, so that it might be appreciated across the seas, whither to his regret none of his works had found their way. When he died it remained with his wife until her death twenty years later, passing then into the possession of the younger of his sons, who now considers that the time has come for the carrying out of his father's wishes. This last great work of Holman Hunt—a work by which he believed that he would be best remembered, for he regarded it as his greatest achievement—is certainly a priceless possession, and would be a magnificent addition to the art collections of any country. One ventures to foretell that it will before long be among the masterpieces of some American or Colonial gallery. Mr. H. L. H. Holman-Hunt's offer to sell such a work cannot but meet with a ready response from across the seas.

As has already appeared in these pages, Holman Hunt looked upon art as he did upon religion. In fact, from the very beginning of his career to the end, it formed an actual part of his religion, of which the essence was *Truth*—an attitude that was confirmed, when he registered a family crest of his own, by his chosen motto, "From Truth Unswerving." Like all great men he was continually learning new lessons; which meant that the more he perfected his art the more critically he came to regard his earlier works. *The Miracle of Sacred Fire* came at a time of full maturity, and at the end of a lifelong career of study and experience such as few artists have achieved. He had learnt the secrets of colour-harmony, and could blend discordant elements in

such a way that the effect was as pleasing and harmonious as the discords that abound in the works of the greatest musicians. Moreover, he understood the most subtle principles of composition, and could arrange and place his smaller groups, each of which formed a complete picture in miniature, so that they played an essential part in the design, and contributed their full share to the unity of effect produced by the picture as a whole. Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that he, and those who followed and understood the progress of his work, regarded *The Miracle of Sacred Fire*, painted as it was at a time when he had gained full command of his resources, as marking the actual zenith of his artistic career, and as summing up a whole lifetime of patient study and research.

The years of toil that saw its progress and completion did not fail to exact their penalty. His remarkable will power and tenacity of purpose were fully equal to the occasion, but in the very act of completing his elaborate work, with all the types and nationalities faithfully represented in feature and in costume, he became conscious that his sight had succumbed to the prolonged strain. He had just time to apply the finishing touches when all became dim before his eyes. Laying down his brush he groped his way with difficulty from the studio into the house, where in one sentence he disclosed to his wife that he had finished his great picture but had become blind. To her dismay she discovered that he could not find his way from place to place without assistance, and though it proved later that he was actually able to advance certain of his unfinished works, her triumph in a great task completed was marred by this unexpected calamity.

XVII

THE ARTIST AND THE MAN

BEFORE taking final leave of the man whom we have followed throughout the struggles and neglect of early years, whom we have watched during the various stages of his progress towards fame, whose well-earned success we have observed, and whom, at length, we have glanced at in the happy settlement of home life, we will turn our attention briefly and for the last time to a few of the most noteworthy characteristics of his work.

An author has a great advantage over a painter in that his works can without difficulty be studied as a complete whole, and his development traced from its early beginnings to its full maturity. A painter's works, on the other hand, have a habit of wandering away into remote parts of the country—some to the various galleries, others to the residences of private owners, and a certain number to no one knows where. It is easy to sympathize with Turner in his urgent request that, after his death, his pictures should be kept together; one regrets, indeed, that, as there are collected editions of the writings of well-known authors, there cannot also be a final collected and chronologically arranged hanging of all the best of a painter's works, so that our eyes may range over them uninterruptedly and trace in them the artist's gradual development.

Hunt's is a robust and manly art; his works bear the unmistakable impress of the strength of his character and personality, and of his keen insight into natural beauty; it might reasonably be expected that the more sophisticated

among us, in their aloofness from the essential simplicity of nature, would fail to be stirred either by the sincerity of his work or by the naïve beauty of his subjects. In a great artist there is always something of the child, and unless the spectator has some share of this characteristic he can never hope to sympathize with the artist's work. Thus it came about that when Hunt's pictures first began to appear they were ridiculed and abused. He gave the public real nature and life, but it dazzled and frightened them.

Elaboration has been spoken of as the chief aim of Pre-Raphaelitism, and Hunt himself refers to this mistaken notion in the following words: "I think that art would have ceased to have the slightest interest for any one of the three painters concerned, had the object been only to make a representation, elaborate or inelaborate, of a fact in Nature. . . . In agreeing to use the utmost elaboration in painting our first pictures, we never meant more than that the practice was essential for training the eye and the hand of the young artist: we should never have admitted that the relinquishment of this habit of work by a matured painter would have made him less of a Pre-Raphaelite."¹ It is interesting to find him hinting, in the passage from which this extract has been taken, at the possibility of his some day taking to larger brushes and enriching his canvases with impasto, because the remnant of his life would not suffice to enable him to express his thoughts in any other fashion. Needless to say, however, he maintained his characteristic delicacy and refinement to the very end. With regard to what was thought to be unnecessary toil in his early work, it is well for us to realize that without this honest labour he could never have achieved anything as an artist. Ruskin undoubtedly points to the truth when he says, "I am aware of no instance

¹ *Contemporary Review*, Vol. XLIX, p. 740.

of a young painter, who was to be really great, who did not in his youth paint with intense effort and delicacy of finish.”¹

And this question of elaboration leads us back to a criticism referred to in an earlier chapter, that Hunt is guilty of giving too clear a definition to the lesser details of his pictures, such, for instance, as the shavings in *The Shadow of Death*. As has been already explained, such a criticism as this is based upon the assumption that the eye of the spectator is directed immovably at whatever object it regards; assuming which to be the case, it could only see clearly the very central portion of that object, the surrounding parts losing in sharpness in proportion to their distance from the centre. But except when looking through a telescope or microscope the eye never does remain so fixed. It glides instinctively over the objects of its regard, whether these objects be the various parts of a picture or whether they make up a scene in real life. Such objects can undoubtedly be rendered indistinct by distance from the spectator, by shadow, or, in cases where a distant landscape forms the chief subject, by the optical difficulty of focusing upon the immediate foreground; but in pictures such as Hunt's they never lose in definition through remoteness from the line of central vision, but are gathered up instantaneously by the habitually mobile eye.

It has already been observed how full of symbolism many of his pictures are, but, with perhaps a single exception, that of *The Triumph of the Innocents*, I believe it to be completely justified. To use his own words written with reference to Tintoretto, “How far such symbolism is warranted depends upon its unobtrusiveness and its restriction within limits not destroying natural beauty.”

He was careful that his work should make its appeal to all

¹ *Academy Notes*, 1855.

classes of people, from the intellectual down to the most unlearned; his regard for simple working-people would, indeed, never have allowed him to paint exclusively for the erudite; nor did he ever pander to the requirements of the sophisticated; had he done so his name would probably not have lived. In his boyish readings of Shakespeare he had always been impressed by the condescension of the poet's mind; he was surprised and gratified to find that this great brain could so frequently stoop to the level of a child, and that it never despised the groundlings; "indeed I concluded," he writes, "that the great measure of welcome awarded to this kingly genius was but a just response to his own large-hearted sympathy with his fellows of every class; he catered for the unlearned not less than for the profoundest philosopher." Hunt possessed a full measure of this breadth of sympathy, and his work, like all great work, was essentially catholic. Following the example of Shakespeare, and all great artists in whatever medium, he was repelled by "all philosophies which assume that the vulgar are to be left for ever unredeemed," and it was this universal warmth of heart which, radiating itself through his paintings, brought happiness and cheer to many a sincere mind.

Among the criticisms that have been made upon his works from time to time is one to the effect that he has been so intent on the pursuit of truth as to have forgotten the need of beauty in art; and, though there is ground for such a charge, yet it would be unjust if we ignored the innumerable difficulties which he experienced in the procuring of suitable models. To paint beautiful people one must be surrounded by beauty in actual life; in an age given up to scientific and mechanical progress to the neglect of more important lines of advance not every painter has the good fortune which Watts enjoyed.

Another criticism relates to the blueness of the shadows in some of his landscapes, such as in that of his *Strayed Sheep*. This criticism is of course groundless, as those who are acquainted with the country in all months of the year will realize ; for there are times and seasons when the presence of moisture in the air renders the shadows of trees and buildings, even to the untrained eye, fully as hyacinthine as Hunt has ever represented them. His chief weakness lies in the catching and transferring to canvas of the more subtle and evanescent effects of distant cloud and sunlight, as for instance in the high pink clouds of the *May Morning on Magdalen Tower*, and in the mountains of *The Scapegoat* ; but here we are encroaching upon the realm in which Turner held all-powerful sway ; what Hunt has achieved in his own chosen sphere no skill of a Turner can ever rival. Like all men of genius he was forever realizing by how great a distance even his most strenuous endeavours came short of their goal ; he must indeed have felt himself profoundly in sympathy with Tintoretto's favourite saying : " *Sempre si fa il mare maggiore.*"

To the difficulties that belong exclusively to the painter's profession were added all the trials and privations resulting from public neglect and discouragement. In referring, towards the end of his life, to his picture, *Christians escaping from Druids*, and its perfect preservation during the whole of the half-century since it was produced, he says something which is certainly provocative of thought : " I can look at it now dispassionately, as though the young man who did it had been some other. I can see its shortcomings and its faults, some of them the young man saw himself without having time and means to correct them, and I can see its merits ; and I can see them more clearly than the youthful workman could when he was tired out with his night and

day devotion to the work, ever persevering, despite all hindrances, to express his meaning; tired, although the labour was the fascination of his life, and only dispirited, not defeated, when the world gave him not one word of encouragement or commendation. And I wonder at the little originality of taste there was among our forbears when the picture was offered to them for a beggarly sum, and they, dealers and rich men of taste alike, turned away from it with contempt."

That he might break loose from the trammels of private patronage, Watts went so far as to undertake certain mural paintings of a public character without professional charge; but Hunt could not afford to follow this example, and the result was that with single small exceptions he was ignored by all public bodies. It is, indeed, extraordinary to reflect that the Church of England should have been so blind as to employ inferior artists whilst it allowed our greatest painter of religious subjects to earn a precarious livelihood from the pockets of private individuals. In an article on Pre-Raphaelitism, printed in Chambers' Encyclopaedia, Hunt refers to the narrowing effect of this kind of patronage upon the best art; after alluding to the public neglect of the Pre-Raphaelites he continues: "Their work, therefore, has been confined to the limits of private patronage, which for the poetic and ambitious art they aimed at is too limited a sphere. Works of national importance are the only entirely appropriate field for the highest efforts."

It is hardly necessary to speak of Hunt's sincerity as a painter. So determined was he upon producing nothing but his best work that there were occasions when the slightest dissatisfaction with what he had done would result in the obliteration from his canvas of months of strenuous toil. He was scrupulously careful in the preparation of his

colours, many of which he ground himself rather than run the risk of failure in permanency. He was in the habit of testing the lasting qualities of the various paints then on the market, and this he did by applying as many samples as he could procure to a number of sets of canvases, each of which he carefully dated. In the course of time it became apparent which of the paints were in future to be avoided. Like the old painters he believed that an artist should be versatile, that he should not only be familiar with all the technical details connected with the preparation of colours, but that he should know something of the sister arts; he practised sculpture, and was a modeller of no mean ability. His whole soul went into his work, and it is therefore not surprising to find him warning Millais of the disadvantages attached to the position of President of the Royal Academy: 'London, with six million of inhabitants, and about three-quarters of these calling themselves 'artists,' would wear any man to death if he felt there was no escape for him. It would assuredly interfere with his opportunities for work very mischievously. I was sorry that so true an artist as Leighton allowed himself to be hampered with the duties permanently. . . . He did his duties magnificently, but he could have worked magnificently also, and the work would have remained for all generations; and this may be the same with you.'

Nor is it to be wondered at that a painter of such ideals should regard with dismay the growing school of Impressionism. "I cannot understand," he says in his book (Vol. II, Ch. xvii), "the correctness of the term *Impressionist* as representing the paramount end of art. Undoubtedly many of the works classed by the public as impressionistic have no evidence of sober common sense; they are without perspective, correct form, or any signs of patient drilling

and scholarship. They suggest suspicion that the workman never duly submitted himself to persistent tuition or patient practice, and not seldom on enquiry will it be found that he took up the pursuit of art so late in life as to prove that he had no natural call from her ; and he covers his inability to conquer the besetting sins, which every tyro must eradicate from his uncultivated disposition, by fine names and theories. . . . Whether it be right to catalogue the hideous canvases often appearing in exhibitions in recent days, chaotic in form, of sullied pigment plastered on offensively, both as to tint and texture, as *Impressionist*, and to class as *Impressionist* sculptures of evil-proportioned humanity displaying a series of monstrous developments in lieu of heavenly-designed muscles, I will not determine."

He then goes on to refer to the Parisian origin of the "school" and to depict the kind of debauched life upon which it grew and thrived; later he writes: "The word *Impressionism*, as used for the main ambition of art, is mere cant, offensive to all who really have acquaintance with the profound subtleties of art practice, yet by blatant repetition and determined assurance trumpeted by idle writers, multitudes are cowed into silence and become incapable of expressing the opinion which common sense suggests to them as to the vacuous nature of such pretensions as the 'modernity' of to-day reveals. . . . The greater part of the work figuring under the name of *Impressionism* is childishly drawn and modelled, ignorantly coloured and handled, materialistic and soulless"; words which invite comparison with a passage in the *Life of Millais*. Referring to the hardship and drudgery of Millais' training as a painter, his son says: "And many a time have I heard him say to young artists, who thought to escape a grind like this by studying

n Paris the methods of the impressionist school, 'Ah! you want to run before you have learnt to walk. You will never get on unless you go through the mill as I did, and as every successful artist has had to do.' "

In his book Hunt refers to the deception habitually practised upon the ignorant and docile by those who try to run before they can walk. "The timid spectator," he says, "dismayed at the abominations, is told by the adorers of such uncultivated outpourings that not to admire is to be a Philistine; that the chaotic mess called a work of art is really the product of the most modern, and therefore the most advanced, thought."

He was a patriot in the best sense of the word. He loved his country, and it grieved him when he saw the seeds of decay mingling themselves with her art-productions. He believed in the close connection of art with character, and in the consequent influence of all artists for good or for ill. "The eternal test of good art," he writes prophetically, "is the influence it is calculated to have on the world, and, actuated by patriotism, all propagandists will consider first the influence of their teaching upon their own nation. What the people are led to admire, that they will infallibly become. When a nation is fascinated by flippancy and mockery of innocence and sincerity, the men and women composing it will incontinently entertain disdain for serious conduct. . . . Toleration of pride will bring its worshippers to haughtiness and contempt of honest simplicity. The mocking of self-restraint will conduct the tide-driven to practical impurity, and if the principles of moral conduct are not honoured in art, it will encourage the ties of social life to be relaxed, and, leaving the force of heredity out of mind, children will grow up with loosened ideals of family honour. It is in following such seductive invitations that the

foundations of a nation are sapped, so that it drifts to the cataract of destruction."

And he continues a little later, "The dissolution of a people's strength begins with sickly literature and base art. We may admit brilliancy in the genius that uses its tinsel to make men laugh at self-government and honour, and to encourage amusing reversals of justice, making disorder pass for the only gaiety of life. Of old with the philosophers there were sophists 'who made the worse appear the better reason'; they were brothers to the prophets, prophesying smooth things."

Whilst admitting as undeniable the frequent assertions that morality "need have nothing to do with art," he felt keenly the truth of Lord Leighton's words: "Believe me, whatever of dignity, whatever of strength we have within us, will display and make strong the labours of our hands; whatever littleness degrades our spirits will lessen them and drag them down; whatever noble fire is in our hearts will burn also in our work; whatever purity is ours will chasten and exalt it. For as we are, so our work is; and what we sow in our lives, that beyond a doubt we shall reap, for good or for ill, in the strengthening or defacing of whatever gifts have fallen to our lot."

Among Hunt's achievements as a painter may be mentioned, by way of repetition of what has already been said, that of his successful representation of the effects of sunlight. It is impossible, of course, to transfer to canvas the complete interval of tone between sunlight and shade, yet, with all the limitations imposed by a painter's materials, Hunt has succeeded in so balancing his colour and shadow that the eye of the spectator is affected as though by the sunshine itself; his works, wherever they are, are conspicuous for this quality of sunlight; they seem almost to light up the room in

hich they are hung. Sunshine is a dynamic force, full of life and power, and Hunt delighted in the glory of its rays. His works are characterized by a radiance of happy colour—a pulsation as of the real living light of day.

As to the scriptural scenes which form the subjects of so many of his works, it may be truly said that he has approached nearer than has any other artist to an actual realization of the external aspects of the Gospel narrative. The ideal of the painter's art consists in beauty of colour, depth of thought, simple power of design, and truth of detail. Giotto leads in the race towards that ideal, though he has inevitably failed in the matter of detail. Hunt, though far behind him in thought and design, must be given full credit as a pioneer in the exploration of one of the paths leading to the ideal, and it remains for some future painter to continue to prepare the way for its final attainment. To Hunt as a painter may be applied without exaggeration some words which he wrote of his friend Millais: "While his works last they will prove the supreme character of his genius, and this will show more conspicuously when the mere superficial tricksters in art have fallen to their proper level."¹

We will conclude this chapter with a word or two about Holman Hunt as a man. Those who remember him in his later years are still able to recall the extraordinary interest of his conversation. He was a voluble talker, but his volubility was welcome to all intelligent listeners, and his remarkable memory—a memory which enabled him to repeat verbatim long passages out of his recent reading without the slightest effort—added considerably to the vividness of his narratives, of which his mind held a goodly supply. He would tell of his adventures in the East, and of the old days

¹ *The Life of J. E. Millais*, by his son, Vol. I, Ch. xi.

of happy intercourse with Millais, Brown and Rossetti; words flowed forth in the gentlest and kindest of tones until the listener was in possession of the minutest details of the incidents related. But he did not confine himself to mere incidents; he was wont at times to relate whole chapters out of his own life. One such occasion is referred to by Edward Clodd in his *Memories*. The story was connected with some events of his early years, and Clodd tells us that it was "recited with so vivid a minuteness as to hold the hearers spellbound; the reciter's wonderful memory supplying the actual conversations. . . . It began in the afternoon, it went on through dinner to bedtime, it was finished the next morning," and the listeners were profoundly impressed by Hunt's power as a story-teller. Another friend, Charles Rowley, writes: "The varied experiences of life and work made Hunt one of the richest and fullest of men. He was brimful of keenly observed matter, both at home and abroad; nothing escaped him."¹

An interesting fact about his reminiscences is that whenever and wherever they were related they were clothed always in the identical language. When his friends referred playfully to this habit of his, his reply was that it was only natural that the same reminiscences should take the same verbal form. His memory for words almost rivalled that of Macaulay. After he had become blind the newspaper was read to him each morning, and it became apparent during the course of lunch that he had at his command the whole of the portions of news that interested him sufficiently to be repeated, and could repeat them in the exact language in which they were printed. When referring in conversation to this extraordinary gift, which applied equally to colour and form, he used to say that his memory had been continu-

¹ *Fifty Years of Work without Wages*, by Charles Rowley.

y exercised during his life in recalling the smallest details things he had seen and in reproducing them on canvas.

As a father he won the warmest love of his children by his gentle indulgence and ready sympathy; no father could have inspired greater affection in his family, and none could have been more missed after his death than was Hunt by his sons, to whom, as they left childhood behind, he became a real friend and brother. But the love which he inspired by his means confined itself to the home-circle; he was surrounded on all hands by friends who held him in the highest esteem, and who saw in the nobility of his character something which marked him out as no ordinary man. They could all of them, I believe, have readily endorsed the following words of Clodd: "When I recall all that he said, and all that he was to me, I apply to him what Jesus said of Nathaniel: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.'"¹

Among his lesser activities may be mentioned his work during many years as Chairman of the Committee of the Marriage Reform Association. Whilst strongly supporting the Christian marriage laws, the abandonment of which he believed would lead in the end to social disintegration, he had every reason to be dissatisfied with the purely human law that forbade marriage with the deceased wife's sister; and when once he took up the cudgels of reform woe betide those who resisted him. His entirely frank and honourable conduct with regard to his second marriage, then illegal in England, has already been recorded. Such frankness was characteristic of the man, and was here a result of his conviction of the injustice of the law. And now, late in life, he came once more into the open, and, while other important men—men who also had married the sisters of their

¹ *Memories*, XVI.

deceased wives—were not sufficiently courageous to give more than secret assistance, he openly challenged the law. Despite the gentle remonstrances of his wife, he wrote letters to the *Times*, he spared no pains in upsetting the arguments of his opponents, he threw himself heart and soul into the work of the Association; with the result that before long he swept away all opposition and emerged triumphant.

He was an omnivorous reader and a keen student of history and art. He had a love of poetry, and the spirit of adventure, which never grew old within him, rendered the best books of travel a continual delight to him. But his interests did not cease here; from early days he had gained a detailed knowledge of the Bible, which he read with increasing interest and understanding to the end of his life. In later years he attended the services of the Church of England, and whilst living at Draycott Lodge he was one of the regular congregation of St. Dionis Church, Parson's Green, to which he presented two proof engravings—the first proof engravings that were ever made of his works—to be hung in the vestibule.

For the clamour of Bible-critics he had a profound contempt, which, however, did not prevent him from reading with a good deal of attention the writings of such men as Renan. The fact that he studied with such care works that were wholly opposed to his view of religion, speaks volumes for his impartiality and sense of justice. Indeed he hated prejudice, and never formed an opinion or pronounced a judgment unless he had been led to it by clear reason. In a letter to W. B. Scott, dated the 19th August, 1883, he wrote: "I know that I seem behind my age in the contempt I have for all its critical condemnations of the evidence on which revealed religion stands. It is the age

critics. If a man gets up and says he is a critic, and that he has discovered the fallacy of such a pretension, he is welcomed and worshipped, no matter what nonsense he utters. Renan's works I have read exhaustively; they are, like the scholarships which makes them worth reading, simply puerile nonsense, with about as much knowledge of the subject as Payne Knight had of the Elgin marbles."¹

And in other letters² to Scott he continued to deal with religious questions. Thus in one dated the 7th April, 1870, he refers to his own personal beliefs, and, after stating his conviction that Christianity "even in its highest pretensions" must be true, he continues: "I ought to explain what I mean by 'highest pretensions.' I do not use the phrase in relation to the authority of the Church; I mean the direct supernatural origin and nature of Christ; that He really came down from heaven, from the dwelling-place of divinity; that He performed miracles, that He rose from the dead and returned again into heaven—there! I have almost written out my creed." And in another he speaks of the visible fruits of Christianity as compared with those of philosophy: "With all the weakness of the men who conduct the business of religion, the noblest efforts of society are made by them. Who try to civilize the savage, to reclaim the convict? Who pick up the ragged boys from the gutter? Who snatch the children from premature labour in pit or factory? Who try to work out a plan of life without war? Who try to raise women from infamy? 'By their fruits ye shall know them' is an axiom simple and divine in wisdom. What, on the other hand, do your philosophers do? Surely nothing of an unselfish kind in comparison, although I thoroughly believe that much is left

¹ Scott's *Autobiography*.

² *Ibid.*

for them as counterpoise to the narrowness and rancour of bigots."

He did not need the sordid evidence of spiritualism to convince him of human immortality, though in a letter to Scott he refers to certain psychological experiences. "In my own experience," writes he in a letter dated the 20th February, 1871, "I have had occasional presentiments, and other psychological consciousnesses, of a nature that forbid me the conclusion that we are mere burning bonfires, to cease with the consumption of the fuel." And in another place he writes: "There are arguments in Materialism itself which are convincing to me of future life, and therefore of future purpose, and of the service of souls made perfect by previous training. I am satisfied that the Father of all has not left us—made as we are with infinite care and thought . . . only to disappear into the black abyss."

I have entered thus far into Hunt's inner mind under the conviction that no portrait can be complete without a glimpse beneath the surface of things, and in the belief that the thoughts of leading men are a part of their legacy to future generations and should on no account be lost.

His working days are now drawing to a close, and work with him is life itself. The weight of the approaching fourscore years cannot fail to leave its mark upon him; yet with Hunt old age is no period of decay, but a time of a rich maturity. One of our last glimpses of the man himself as he appeared to those about him is given us in the portrait painted by Sir William Richmond in 1900. We have before us here, in the ample forehead, the kindly, sympathetic, deep-seeing eyes, the venerable beard, and the smooth, flowing hair parted in the middle, the very type and ideal of magnificent old age; and in looking upon that thoughtful face one cannot but feel that here sits a

an in whom is indeed no guile, whom the ignoble has never
iled, and who is facing life to the very end with that passion
r truth which has been his constant guide through all the
rying degrees of fortune and misfortune incidental to a
ng and active career.

XVIII

LAST YEARS AND DEATH

1899 TO 1910

THE completion of *The Miracle of Sacred Fire* had set him free, despite his impaired sight, to advance those pictures which had already been begun but were still unfinished, one of which was a replica of *The Light of the World*. It has already been seen how near to destruction the original painting had come as a result of the injudicious hanging of it near some hot-water pipes. This had alarmed the painter not a little, and constituted one of the reasons for his decision to undertake a second painting, lest some further misfortune might result in its entire destruction. Other reasons were his disappointment that a charge of sixpence was being made to those of the public who wished to see it, and his dissatisfaction with an error of proportion, which, as a young man, he had allowed himself to fall into. It was but natural that the painter of such a picture should wish it to be accessible to rich and poor alike; and, upon the completion of the replica, he was deeply gratified when the purchaser, The Right Honourable Charles Booth, decided that it should be exhibited in the colonies and eventually presented to St. Paul's Cathedral, where it now hangs in the south aisle so that the public can see it without payment and unattended.

In 1904, after the completion of the replica, we find his correspondence bearing the new address of 18, Melbury Road, Kensington, whither he had lately removed and where he found himself at no great distance from Little Holland

ouse, for years the abode of the painter Watts whom he now visited for the last time. "One morning when I lled," he writes in his book, "I found that house in *promptu* festal state, for the rustic workers in wood-carving and pottery who had been trained in the school founded by Mrs. Watts had come to London to see the exhibitions, and the guests were just sitting down in the dismantled gallery to a substantial repast. After exchanging some words with the young men and lads, as I left the studio I fondly glanced at the beautiful picture of *Echo* still upon the wall, which at the Westminster Hall competition was the first of Watts' paintings I had ever seen. I ascended with the host to the room where the family meal was laid. He was quite his own gentle and eager self in all but a slight deafness in spite of benefit conferred by an electric treatment. . . He avowed that he was depressed at the prospect to our country, and, indeed, to the world at large, by the inordinate indulgence of all classes in idle pleasure, which led men to schemes for acquiring money with indifference as to who might be ruined in the struggle; he deplored the indulgence in gambling of every kind, so rife from high to low, as leading to degraded ideas of honour which could only disintegrate any nation." And, summoning to his aid an extraordinary memory, Hunt next proceeds to pour forth the very words as spoken by Watts himself, in the course of which the latter expresses his regret that "there are now artists both in painting and sculpture, whose works at modern exhibitions make their authors appear to be actuated by the prevalent spirit of shirking their labour instead of showing sign of determination to overcome difficulties of approach to perfection."

"I had to break away abruptly," says Hunt, "hoping that on another visit we could resume the talk with happier

outlook, but in a few days he caught a chill, and grew feverish and increasingly weak, with intervals of flickering hope to his devoted household. In a glorious peace he died on the 1st July, 1904."

In the year following that of Watts' death Hunt was admitted to the Order of Merit, and in the same year he received from the University of Oxford, at their encænias, the honorary degree of D.C.L. In 1906 his works were collected for the second time, and exhibited at the Leicester Galleries, the catalogue containing a preface by Sir William Richmond.

The one great affliction of these last years now calls for mention. His blindness had begun some time before the completion of the replica of *The Light of the World*, and during the advancement both of this work and others he experienced an ever-increasing dimness of vision, which in the end rendered progress with his own hand impossible, and obliged him to call in the assistance of Edward Hughes, a great friend and admirer, who under his supervision completed *The Light of the World* and several others that were then unfinished. Later the trouble became so serious that George Meredith, in a letter dated the 17th December, 1908, compares it with Milton's affliction. Hunt had been present at the recent tercentenary celebrations of the birth of Milton, and Meredith writes as follows :

"Dear Holman Hunt,

"Your gallantry in going to Burlington House had been mentioned to me, and I envied you—not as being one of the audience, but for proving legs and hearing. At the same time I remember sadly that you are now sharing Milton's woe, most grievous for a painter. That you bear the affliction with fortitude I can believe. It is nevertheless a cutting away from the world. . . . As to us two, we may say that

e gods may rob us of everything except the heart to endure.

“Ever warmly yours,

“GEORGE MEREDITH.”¹

In addition to number 18 Melbury Road, Hunt now had a cottage, built by himself in 1901, at Sonning-on-Thames—a quiet home to which he could retire when he needed respite from the noise and bustle of town life; but, alas, his blindness now severed him from the enjoyment of its rural beauties. His friend, Charles Rowley, gives the following account of a visit to him in this quiet retreat: “I cherish memories of a visit to the Holman Hunts’ delightful country house at Sonning-on-Thames. On Sunday I was entrusted with the veteran with his darkened vision for an afternoon talk. I had received strict directions as to the way out and home in those pleasant lanes, but, true to my character as ‘the Loser,’ we soon got wrong. It made no difference to my companion, although he knew full well that I had lost him. The rain came on, we sheltered in a cottage, where he soon grew friendly, and we got home some two hours late. But what a talk he had, and what a willing auditor! He went over the old days with Millais, Madox Brown, Gabriel Rossetti, and others, spoke of his Eastern experiences, and of a host of friends and things in London. Nothing could have been more perfect and luminous than his delightful talk.”²

As to his blindness, Hunt bore it with characteristic patience. He never murmured when the colours grew dim before his eyes; he never complained when the advancing darkness obliged him to lay down his brush; his only words, as the daylight faded from his vision, were, “I have

¹ *Letters of George Meredith*, edited by his son, Vol. II.

² *Fifty Years of Work without Wages*, by Charles Rowley.

no reason to grumble, when for more than seventy years my eyes have served me well."

Whilst loss of sight, though never complete, was the one great trial of these latter years, chronic asthma proved itself to be the graver evil. As has been said, this affection had first seriously attacked him many years previously, as a result of the severe trials undergone during the progress of *The Triumph of the Innocents*. As year succeeded year the trouble increased, so that there was now danger even in the catching of the slightest cold. At the end of July, 1910, he went to Sonning in what appeared to be quite good health, but somewhat later he had a slight attack of bronchitis, from which, however, he seemed to be quickly recovering, when a return of his periodical attacks of asthma, coupled with a slight chill taken on the 22nd August, brought with it further troubles. Breathing became a matter of some difficulty, and the resulting strain upon the heart weakened him to such an extent that on the 5th September his strength actually began to fail. London had always been his true home, so that now, when he expressed a wish to return, arrangements were instantly made for his removal. He was scarcely conscious when on the 6th he was conveyed to Melbury Road; oxygen was then administered, and the slender thread of life was thus artificially preserved unbroken until the following day (Wednesday, the 7th September) when, in the presence of his wife, his daughter and his daughter-in-law (his sons being both in India), he quietly breathed his last at the age of eighty-three and some months.

On the 10th September the body was cremated at Golders Green amid a large gathering of mourners; two days later the funeral took place in St. Paul's Cathedral, being attended by thousands of people, and by a vast concourse

who remained outside in the churchyard. These latter, says the *Times* of the 13th September, "were the representatives of many millions who had never seen Holman Hunt in the flesh, but to whom he was far more than a name; for his pictures had carried him, a revered and familiar friend, into homes without number all over the world." Many well-known men and women attended, and it may be interesting to name the pall-bearers, who were—Sir Charles Holroyd, Lord Tennyson, William Rossetti, Charles Booth, Arthur Hughes, Sir Norman Lockyer, Forbes Robertson and Professor Gollancz. The burial took place in the crypt of the Cathedral, near the resting places of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Turner, Millais and Lord Leighton, and at the close of the service crowds collected in the south aisle to examine *The Light of the World*.

At the afternoon service of the Sunday immediately preceding the funeral, Canon Scott Holland at the close of his sermon in St. Paul's truly said that Holman Hunt was honoured as "one who through all his life never slackened in devotion to the spiritual ideals of his first youth." "Born within a stone's throw of St. Paul's," he continued, "a lover of the City of London, of which he knew every nook and corner, he will be laid to rest not only in the heart of that City, but at the foot of Millais' grave, whom he loved from his youth.) Strong in the spirit of consecration, in spite of the bitterness which came with isolation, with unflagging heart and untiring skill he worked on until his eyesight failed and the brush fell from his hand. So he has passed quietly away, venerated by generations and honoured by his King."

It remains only to record that his wife survived him by twenty years and was buried with him in the crypt of St. Paul's.

APPENDIX

The following brief list includes the names of the best known of Holman Hunt's works, most of which are hung in public galleries. The replicas and finished studies at present in private possession have not been included.

SHEFFIELD

THE GRAVES ART GALLERY

Little Nell and her Grandfather.

MANCHESTER

THE CITY ART GALLERY

Christ and the Two Marias (on loan).

The Hireling Shepherd (larger and later version).

The Light of the World (small version).

The Scapegoat (small replica).

The Lantern Maker's Couriship.

The Shadow of Death.

And lesser works, including the pastel drawing of D. G. Rossetti.

OXFORD

ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM

Christians escaping from Druids.

The Afterglow.

London Bridge at Night.

The Festival of St. Swithin.

The Plain of Esdraelon.

The Sleeping City.

And portraits of Fanny Waugh (the artist's first wife), Miriam Wilkinson, and Mr. and Mrs. Combe.

BIRMINGHAM

THE CITY ART GALLERY

Valentine and Sylvia.

The Finding of Christ in the Temple.

May Morning on Magdalen Tower. (Study for the original picture.)

And a number of drawings.

NEWCASTLE

THE LAING ART GALLERY

Isabella and the Pot of Basil (on loan).

LONDON

THE TATE GALLERY

Claudio and Isabella.

The Ship.

The Triumph of the Innocents. (This version was the one first completed, after the temporary abandonment of the original. There exists, also, a third, smaller version.)

And portraits, an etching and several engravings.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

Ponte Vecchio, Florence.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Portrait of *The Right Hon. Stephen Lushington.*

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

The Light of the World (replica).

PORT SUNLIGHT

THE LADY LEVER ART GALLERY

The Scapegoat.

May Morning on Magdalen Tower.

LIVERPOOL

THE WALKER ART GALLERY

The Triumph of the Innocents. (Begun in Jerusalem.)
And several portraits.

FLORENCE

UFFIZI GALLERY

Portrait of *Holman Hunt* by himself.

TORONTO

FINE ART GALLERY

Portrait of *Henry Wentworth Monk*.

MELBOURNE

FINE ART GALLERY

The Importunate Neighbour.

The Miracle of Sacred Fire and *The Lady of Shalott* are among the works that remain with the painter's family.

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